MORRISON AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH

THE POEMS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

WITH MEMOIR, ETC.

'De patrie, et de Dieu, des poètes, de l'âme
Qui s'élève en priant "—VICTOR HUGO



LONDON
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.
AND NEW YORK

DEDICATION

TO MY FATHER.

When your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you, who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world; nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how, if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.

London, 50 Wimpole Street,
1844.

PREFACE.

THE poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning have won an assured and high place in English literature, and many of the finest of them, such as "The Drama of Exile," which established her poetical reputation; "The Seraphim;" "The Rhyme of the Duchess May," etc., are extremely popular. The shorter poems (some of them gems of thought), by which she is best known, perhaps, to the general public, are embodied in this volume. And as it has been usual of late years to include the early poems of our great poets in their collected works, Mrs. Browning's have also been retained.

A brief Memoir of the Author has been prefixed to the poems, with the addition of personal reminiscences of Mrs. Browning from the pen of her intimate friend, Mrs. David Ogilvy, who resided in Italy at the Casa Guidi with the poetess and her gifted husband in 1849–50.

PREFACE TO THE 1844 EDITION.

THE collection here offered to the public consists of poems which have been written in the interim between the periods of the publication of my "Seraphim" and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression,—and, with the exception of a few contribu-

tions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the "Drama of Exile," is the longest and most important work (to *me!*) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen, and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating "groan of the whole creation,"—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the Idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary Idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—*I* also an exile. It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect

the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground; they raised on the buskin, and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer, nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath, did no harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer, who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation,—whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only—I appeal. To this analogy—*not* to this comparison, be it understood—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The Divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and trans figured; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out, "Profane." Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing "the Heavenly Love" among the persons of his drama, is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to 'live by faith.' There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer

to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word GOD were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me, that I have done that in reverence, from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place, — the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the East, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב of Genesis, signifies a "mingling," and approaches the meaning of our "twilight" analytically. Apart from which considerations, my "exiles" are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the "Drama of Exile" in the collection, is the "Vision of Poets," in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles; and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea, is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature, than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called "la patience angélique du génie;" and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that

scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my "Seraphim" was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something, indeed, I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort,—since "we learn in suffering what we teach in song,"—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better,—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me;—and if I cry out too hopefully at sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults,—as I go forward to my critics and confess,—they have my heart and life in them,—they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work so far, as work,—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being,—but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain,—and as work I offer it to the public,—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration,—but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done, should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

PREFACE TO THE 1850 EDITION.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts. One early failure, a translation of the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, which, though happily free of the current of publication, may be remembered against me by a few of my personal friends, I have replaced by an entirely new version, made for them and my conscience, in expiation of a sin of my youth, with the sincerest application of my mature mind. This collection includes, also, various poems hitherto unprinted, which I am glad to have the present opportunity of throwing behind me, so as to leave clear the path before, towards better aims and ends . . . may I hope? . . . than any which are attained here.

FLORENCE,
January 1850.

CONTENTS.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

SONNETS.

kindness was repaid by the great advantage she derived from his conversation; and she has commemorated his friendship in three charming sonnets, and by the inscription, "in grateful affection," she says, of her poem of "Cyprus Wine" to him.

The memory of her beautiful Herefordshire home remained long with Elizabeth Barrett after she had left it, to cheer her, and to add a charm to many of the poems she wrote in the sick-chamber, to which she was early condemned by an accidental injury to her spine.

In 1825 Miss Barrett became a contributor to the best periodicals of the day; and in 1826 published her first volume of poems, containing an "Essay on Mind," and minor poems. In 1828 her first sorrow fell on her. Her mother died, and soon after the added grief came of leaving her beautiful and beloved home. Mr. Barrett had had severe pecuniary losses, which his loving care for his wife had increased, for to shield her from all knowledge of them he had made great sacrifices. After her death he thought it necessary to leave Hope End, and the family went to reside at Sidmouth.

While living here, Elizabeth published her second volume of poems, containing a translation of Æschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, which was rather severely criticised. Her own matured judgment also condemned it; it was therefore withdrawn from circulation, and later on she re-translated it.

After a residence of two years at Sidmouth, the Barretts moved to Gloucester Place, London, and in 1838 Miss Barrett published "The Seraphim" and other poems. Her health then became so bad that she was ordered to the south coast, and went to Torquay. The fresh sea breezes and soft Devon air proved so beneficial that her perfect recovery was hoped for; but a fearful catastrophe destroyed all the benefit she had received from them. Her favourite brother, Edward, came to visit her, and went out one day with two friends for a sail—a sailor with them. They did not return. A period of despairing anxiety for their friends followed, and then their bodies were recovered, having drifted up channel. The boat had upset in Babbicombe Bay, and all in her had perished. This shock threw the unhappy sister into a serious illness, from which she did not recover sufficiently to be moved back to her home for a twelve-month. When she was at length brought to London, she was for many years confined to a sick-room in their Wimpole Street house.

Nevertheless, in 1844, she again collected and published her poems. This edition contained the fine dramatic poem, "A Dream of Exile," which greatly increased her reputation as an author.

She was assisted by the advice of her cousin, Mr. John Kenyon, a literary man of great ability, who also brought her books and kept her in touch with the world of literature.

Her health improved, and about this time Mr. Kenyon introduced her to Robert Browning, the poet. Their sympathy of tastes and mutual admiration soon produced a strong attachment, and on the 12th of September 1846 they were quietly married. Her husband at once took his bride to Italy, for the sake of her health, and they settled at Florence.

In 1850 Mrs. Browning issued an edition of her poems in two volumes, and other editions followed in 1853 and 1856.

Her only child, Robert, was born at Florence in 1849. The genius of his parents in him developed in the sister art of painting, and he became a well-known artist.

We are indebted to the kindness of Mrs. David Ogilvy, the author of the beautiful *Highland Minstrelsy*, for a glimpse of Mrs. Browning in her Italian home.

Mrs. Ogilvy was introduced to the Brownings by Mrs. Browning's cousin, Mrs. Martin Lindsay.

"In the early spring of 1848 my husband and I were driving in Rome with a Mr. and Mrs. Martin Lindsay. Mrs. Lindsay was talking of her cousin, Mrs. Browning. Suddenly she said, 'You are just the people to suit "Ba;" would you like an introduction?' We jumped at the offer.

"'Ba' was Mrs. Browning's pet name. Her husband called her so, her sister Arabel called her so, and so did the large family of Gloucestershire cousins, who came to Florence in 1851–52.

"On reaching Florence from Rome, June 1848, we at once called at Casa Guidi. Robert Browning was playing with all his heart and soul on a grand piano. He sprang up, striding forward with outstretched hand. His wife was curled up in a corner of a sofa in the middle of the large dim *sala*, hung with old brown tapestry and ancient pictures. With her profuse feathery curls half hiding her small face, and her large, soft, pleading eyes, she always reminded me of a King Charles spaniel. Something unutterably pathetic looked out of those soft eyes. Light was not in favour with Mrs. Browning. She

habitually sat in dark rooms, and was so little out of doors, that her accuracy of observation was all the more remarkable. Her son was born on March 9, 1849, and as my son was born not long before, we were as much drawn together by motherhood as by intellectual sympathy. We were four eager enthusiasts, and quite in accord about painting and sculpture. But in poetry we had different canons, and the Brownings were too original-minded themselves to wish for servile assent in our opinions. Mrs. Browning read largely of French novels. I once saw a huge pile beside her; 'They will soon melt down,' she remarked. She greatly admired George Sand's writings, and, on meeting her in Paris in 1850, wrote to me, elated that George Sand had kissed her. She was scandalised by my reply, that such a kiss reminded me of Becky kissing Amelia when they met in later life. In truth, Mrs. Browning with all her genius had the simple purity of Thackeray's heroine.

"We spent the autumn of 1849 near each other at the Baths of Lucca, and in October we Ogilvys rented the upper floor of Casa Guidi, where the Brownings occupied the first floor or *piano nobile*. Of course we met daily, and had many common acquaintances—the Trollopes, Montgomery Stewart, Power, and Greenhough, the American sculptors, Kirkup, the friend of Trelawny, Mrs. Jameson, the authoress, etc. In 1850, after some months spent at Naples, Capri, and Sorrento, we again wintered in Florence, and in May 1851 my husband and I joined the Brownings in a *vetturino* journey by Bologna, Parma, Modena, and Mantua, to Venice, where we had rooms on the Grand Canal, the Brownings on the first floor, and we Ogilvys on the floor above. We generally went together for dinner to the Piazza di San Marco, and if Mrs. Browning and I came back alone, she invariably lost her way, unless I did the piloting. I think those were the longest walks I ever knew her attempt. She very much depended for strength on a daily dose of ether in some peculiar mixture prescribed for her. One day the child got hold of the medicine after the maid had measured and poured it out. He drank it off, and great was the alarm, but it did not hurt him.

"Mr. Browning and his wife were a contrast in temperament. He so vehement, talkative, and hasty, full of gesticulation, and fond of argument. She quiet, half-proud, half-humorous in her expression, as he expatiated, coming in now and then with a little deprecatory 'Oh, Robert!' as a gentle drag on his impetuosity. In general, she was intense rather than excitable, and

she took life too seriously for her own happiness. She could so little bear to pain any one she loved, that I had to administer the baby's medicine, to save her the trial. It was well for her that she went before husband and child. She could not have survived them.

"After a fortnight or three weeks together of delightful wanderings about Venice, and long talks on the balcony of an evening, overlooking the canal, the Brownings went to London, *via* Paris, and my husband and I crossed the Brenner to Munich, and through Bavaria to England. We met again in the Great Exhibition, which was too gaudy, too noisy, and too fatiguing to please Mrs. Browning.

"In autumn we were all back in Florence, Mrs. Browning's Gloucestershire cousins, the Peytons, having the first floor of the Villino Lustrine, opposite the Pitti Gardens, and we had the ground floor. The Peytons told me much of their cousin's early life, and of her brother's sad death at Torquay. In May 1852 we left Italy finally, stopping a month at Paris, to be with the Brownings, who had found us rooms near theirs. It was during the short Presidency of Louis Napoleon, who did not then seem popular with the Parisians. I think Mr. Browning mistrusted Louis Napoleon, as my husband and I did; and as yet Mrs. Browning had not discovered his merits. We had much good talk in their Paris *salotto*, Mrs. Jameson and 'Orion' Horne being often present. One evening we all told ghost stories, till Mrs. Browning cried 'Basta!' Madame Doche was then playing in 'La Dame aux Camelias,' and Mrs. Browning was very enthusiastic about her.

"We saw the Brownings again in London once or twice, and they came to London in 1855 for a short time, when we were living in the suburbs; but after 1852 our intercourse was chiefly by letter. She made me promise to keep her letters private, and I have respected her wish. In 1861 her sister Henrietta died; my mother-in-law, whom the Brownings had known well in Florence, died at the same time, or a little later. After her sister's death, Mrs. Browning was for two months quite prostrated; then she wrote me a touching letter, quivering with pain, and, speaking of her motherless nieces, she said, 'I see my own child's face through a mist of tears.' Not long after she wrote condoling with us on my mother-in-law's death, and her own sorrow was still bleeding. Very soon after she was herself laid in the grave.

"Her letters were written in minute scratches no thicker than the hairs on a daisy stalk, on tiny note sheets, folded sometimes into tiny envelopes, the whole forming apparently a doll's epistle. But if the writing was thin, the thoughts and feelings were stout and strong. Nearly half of every letter is made up of anecdotes of 'Penini,' as her boy called himself. How he longed for a little brother; how he wished to be either the Pope or Louis Napoleon; how he went to the Carnival in a rose domino and a mask, and resented the holding of his hand by his nurse; how he read Grimm's fairy tale of the Twelve Brothers, and sighed for a dozen of the same, and how his mother too sighed for a little daughter that never came. A daughter was born to me while I lived in Casa Guidi, and I can see vividly in my mind the figure of Mrs. Browning pacing up and down with the baby girl in her arms, her long curls dropping over the tiny face, her eyes full of love and yearning. As Penini grew older, the letters told how his mother taught him English, French, and Italian; how he kept a journal, and read Dumas in his bed, by the light of a candle in his wash-basin, and recited the patriotic songs of Dall' Ongari to the Sienese peasant boys. His father gave him two hours' daily musical instruction, and one letter tells proudly that he could play a sonata of Beethoven at eight or nine years old. Penini had one rival only in his mother's heart, and that was Italy. All her letters are full of Italian politics. Her doubts of Mazzini, her rapturous admiration for Louis Napoleon as Italy's deliverer, her wrath at British apathy, her dread of priestly machinations; the letters are seething from end to end with passionate emotion. It irked her that, with almost equal desire for Italian freedom, I could not believe in Louis Napoleon's disinterested greatness and magnanimity. She had condoned the *coup d'état* of December 1852; I could not. It was strange that, with such boundless sympathy for Italy's troubles, she expressed scant feeling for either the Crimean or the Indian Mutiny troubles of her own countrymen. The little she does say of them refers chiefly to my anxiety over relatives engaged in both of those terrible wars.

"She professed an abstract horror of all things military. She had little of the clinging to ancestral traditions which has so large a place in the Scottish temperament. Her cousins, the Peytons, abounded in family traditions, but one might know Mrs. Browning for years, and never hear of one of her 'forbears.' I attributed this greatly to old Mr. Barrett's sturdy Nonconformity;

but I have since met well born Dissenters with plenty of family legend.

"Mrs. Browning was reared in Nonconformity, and Mr. Browning was brought up in Calvinism. Both to a certain degree shook off their trammels, but both lived and died Puritans at heart. Mrs. Browning added to her religious faith a keen hankering after mesmeric spiritualism, more than, I fancy, her husband thought safe for her impressionable nature. In the summer of 1855, when they were in London, she was telling me her recent experiences at *séances*. He was impatiently pacing up and down the room; suddenly he wheeled round and broke out, 'And what does it all end in? In your finding yourself in a locked room, and the keeper putting in his head, and asking what you will be pleased to have for dinner!' 'Oh, Robert!' was all his wife's rejoinder. Looking back over thirty years since her death, I can see that her high and noble mind had limitations; that she was a powerful torrent foaming against the rocks, and not a wide sea spreading over a hemisphere. But her perfect sincerity and purity of motive, her freedom from jealousy or pettiness of feeling, her warm heart and sweet temper, would have made a stupid woman lovable, and made her, with her intellectual power, adorable then when she lived in the flesh, and now when she lives in the memory.

"A picture of Casa Guidi when I knew it would hardly be complete without a sketch of its servants. The Brownings treated them as friends, and made few changes. Wilson, the North-country maid, was devoted to her mistress, and became the boy's nurse on the departure of the 'Balia.' Later on, she married Ferdinando, her fellow-servant. She was not a typical lady's maid, being gentle and unassuming; after her marriage Mrs. Browning often lamented her lack of strong-mindedness, she was so easily victimised. The cook in 1848 was a fantastic old fellow, Alessandro, of whom his master had always new anecdotes. His wife died at Christmas. The disconsolate widower could not stop crying to concoct the 'Gran Budino' (plum-pudding). The next week he presented it with all due honours, apologising elaborately for his wife having committed the 'inconvenience' of dying at the date she did."

Mrs. Browning while living in Florence wrote "Casa Guidi Windows," 1851, "Aurora Leigh," 1857, and "Poems before Congress," 1860. Her "Last Poems," 1862, and posthumous Poems were edited by her poet-husband.

She died in the old Italian city on June 30, 1861.

The municipality of Florence have had a tablet to her memory placed on the walls of Casa Guidi. The inscription, written by Tommaseo, runs thus:—

"Qui scrisse e morì E. B. B., che in cuore di donna conciliava scienze di dotto e spirito di poeta, e fece del suo verso aureo anello fra Italia e Inghilterra. Pose questa memoria Firenze grata. 1861." *

* "Here lived and wrote E. B. B., who united to a woman's heart the science of the learned, and the spirit of the poet, and made by her poetry a golden ring uniting Italy and England. Grateful Florence places this memorial. 1861."

THE POEMS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

A Drama of Exile.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with clouds, from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved. A watch of innumerable* angels, *rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith; and the glare, cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness.* ADAM *and* EVE *are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The* ANGEL GABRIEL *and* LUCIFER *are beside the gate.*

Luc. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!
Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.
Gab. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light
Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls;—
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages; whence to mark despair,
And measure out the distances from good!
Go from us straightway.
Luc. Wherefore?
Gab. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place, trod sorrow up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world—wherefore not I?
Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I?
Gab. Depart.
Luc. And where's the logic of "depart"?
Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream
Of guarding some monopoly in Heaven
Instead of earth? Why, I can dream with thee
To the length of thy wings.
Gab. I do not dream.
This is not Heaven, even in a dream; nor earth,
As earth was once,—first breathed among the stars,—
Articulate glory from the mouth divine,—
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,
Touched like a lute-string,—and the sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth, not new created, but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate, not opened, but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword, alive with justice and with fire!)
That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel, go . . . depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.
Luc. By no means.
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;
It holds, like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow:—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,
And temples, if it please you:—we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
Right o'er the edges. And, good Gabriel,
(Ye like that word in Heaven!) *I* too have strength—
Strength to behold Him, and not worship Him;

Strength to fall from Him, and not cry on Him;
Strength to be in the universe, and yet
Neither God nor His servant. The red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto God;
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

Gab. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel!

Luc. Well! and if it be,
I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven;
And leave me to the earth which is mine own
In virtue of her misery, as I hers,
In virtue of my ruin! turn from both,
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood;
And spare to read us backward any more
Of your spent hallelujahs.

Gab. Spirit of scorn!
I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and space;
That who elects, assumes a something good
Which God made possible; that who lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .

Luc. Let it pass!
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I stand up
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say for that,
Its stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou.*

Gab. I kneel.

Luc. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy Heaven,
And leave my earth to me.

Gab. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely; and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,

Therefore with love: His lightnings go abroad,
His pity may do so; His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.
Luc. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits of scorn—
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignest angel of you all.
Gab. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise,
While hate avenges.
Luc. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my wrist,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Drawn from the finite, speeding my descent;
When countless angel-faces, still and stern,
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens,
Adown the abysmal spaces; and I fell,
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight in your eyes;—'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!
Gab. Yet, thou discrowned one, by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All,—save that truth, and His love over it,—
To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars;
When their rays tremble round them with much song.
Sung in more gladness!
Luc. Sing, my Morning Star!
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that I loved!
If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
What were it to this angel?
Gab. What Love is!
And now I have named God.
Luc. Yet, Gabriel,

By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
Thou and I have not solved his problem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
That red-clay and a breath! who must, forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his trees
And running in his rivers, to make glad
His soul made perfect,—if it were not for
The hope within thee, deeper than thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
Which affront Heaven with their vacuity?
Gab. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in Heaven
To suit thy bitter words. Glory and life
Fulfil their own depletions: and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in
A compensative splendour up the skies,
Flushing the starry arteries!
Lu. With a change!
So, let the vacant thrones, and gardens too,
Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
Am here, and will not go; while there, along
The light to which ye flash the desert out,
Flies your adopted Adam! your red-clay
In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?
Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!
Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?
Lu. Ay; I know they have fled
Wordless all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear, for burden on their backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them! and I know

They dare not look in one another's face,—
As if each were a cherub!

Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?

Luc. Only as much as this:
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gab. Nothing more?

Luc. Why, so the angels taunt! What should be more?

Gab. God is more.

Luc. Proving what?

Gab. That He is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

Luc. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin!

Gab. I charge thee by the memory of Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!

Luc. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

Gab. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
When up against the white shore of our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God!

Luc. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

Gab. I charge thee by that mournful Morning Star
Which trembles . . .

Luc. Hush! I will not hear thee speak
Of such things. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends,
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I assert my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men bend slow their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood, and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS.

(Chanting from Paradise, while Adam and Eve fly across the Sword-glare.)

Hearken, oh hearken! let your souls, behind you,
Lean, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
O lost, beloved!
Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels
They press and pierce:
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
Voice throbs in verse!
We are but orphaned Spirits left in Eden;
A time ago,
God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden
To feed you so!
But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
No work to do;
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
The whole earth through;
And all those stains lie clearly round for showing
(Not interfused!)
That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,
Than shall be used.
Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken surely,
For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
Of spirits' tears!
The yearning to a beautiful, denied you,
Shall strain your powers;
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours!
In all your music, our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross;
And all fair sights shall mind you of diviner,
With sense of loss!
We shall be near, in all your poet-languors
And wild extremes,
What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
Or light with dreams!

And when upon you, weary after roaming,
Death's seal is put,
By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,
Through eyelids shut

Spirits of the Trees.

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,
Slow and solemn to your hearing!
Plane and cedar, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each is throbbing in vibration
Since that crowning of creation,
When the God breath spake abroad,
Pealing down the depths of Godhead,
Let us make man like to God —
And the pine stood quivering
In the Eden gorges wooded,
As the awful word went by,
Like a vibrant chorded string
Stretched from mountain peak to sky!
And the platan did expand,
Slow and gradual, branch and head;
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand!—
Grove and forest bowed aslant
In emotion jubilant

Voice of the same, but softer

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight, and the noonlight,
With a ruffling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances;
Never stirred by rain or breeze!
Fare ye well, farewell!
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye heard before:
Farewell! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-Spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
Hark the flow!
How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,—
Of the banks
Where the alders and red deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,
As if all would drink at once,
Where the living water runs:—
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges:
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams,
With impassive eyes turned shoreward,
And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before:
Farewell! the streams of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you,
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail!
I sit upon a cypress-bough,
Close to the gate; and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
Over the gate and after you!

And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas!
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over rote, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite;
And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
And something abides, and something floats,
In the song which I sing after you:
Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before:
Farewell! the birds of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng!
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom;
We call your thoughts home, as
Ye breath our perfume;
To the amaranth's splendour
Afire on the slopes;
To the lily-bells tender,
And grey heliotropes!
To the poppy-plains, keeping
Such dream-breath and blee
That the angels there stepping
Grew whiter to see!
To the nook, set with moly,
Ye jested one day in,
Till your smile waxed too holy,
And left your lips praying!
To the rose in the bower-place,
That dripped o'er you sleeping;
To the asphodel flower-place,
Ye walked ankle-deep in!

We pluck at your raiment,
We stroke down your hair,—
We faint in our lament,
And pine into air.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
Expire at Eden's door!
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before:
Farewell! the flowers of Eden
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence.* ADAM *and* EVE *fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark* ANGEL *passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge,
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?
Eve. Have I not strength to look up to thy face?
Adam. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—
Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this,
In still reflection of still splendour. There,
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side, and overhead the gate,—
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn claspings of their wings,
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,
The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
To me, at least,—than could appear their light.
Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
In a heap earthward; and thy body heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!
Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
Seeing that I confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name. Sweet, punish me!
O love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
My seed shall the first tempter's: strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden! and as HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
I, also, after tempting, writhe on ground;
And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
As suits me, O my tempted!
Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My blessed life and light! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we: God is just;
And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
It must be that His balance holds the weights
Of first and last sin on a level. What!
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—
Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
Might take thee into grace for scorning me;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin!

And so, the blessed angels might come down
And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—
Because I was not near to make them sad,
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. THOU!

Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
The best gift last; the last sin was the worst,
Which sinned against more complement of gifts
And grace of giving. God! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill Heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbed hands,
And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty, and dominion, and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this life
Within life—this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation!

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!
I, standing here between the glory and the dark,—
The glory of Thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*,
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise;—
With angel looks and angel songs around,
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness,
Without the uses of her comforting.

Eve. Or is it but a dream of thee, that speaks
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,

And look away from Heaven, which doth accuse me,
And look away from earth, which doth convict me,
Into her face; and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love; and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds;
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart;
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath,
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed:
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up--so! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know
Death's strength, by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me;
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so,—as if in a dream or prayer,—
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance, cast by swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Rocking against each other—O Lord God!
('Twas so I prayed,) I ask Thee by my sin,
And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face,
And from the face of my beloved here,
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
Into the new dark mystery of death!

I will lie still there; I will make no plaint;
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,—
Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
O death, whate'er it be, is good enough
For such as I.—For Adam—there's no voice,
Shall ever say again, in Heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer:
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes slant from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—
But the love-angels who came erst to us,
And when we said "GOD," fainted unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto God,
(As if He drew them inward in a breath,)
His name being heard of them,—I think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
  Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the Human
  Smoothly to unravel

All that web of pain
  Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
  Chanting down the Golden?
Do ye guess our choice is,
  Being unbeholden,
To be harkened by you, yet again?

This pure door of opal,
  God hath shut between us,—
Us, His shining people,
  You, who once have seen us,
And are blinded new!
  Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
  Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
  Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed.
We came as if the Heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare!
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud;
While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or, abrupt though tender,
  While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendour
  In either human face!
With mystic lilies in our hands,—
From the atmospheric bands,
Breaking, with a sudden grace,
  We took you unaware!

While our feet struck glories
  Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
  Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Oft, when Heaven-descended,
  Shut up in a secret light
  Stood we speechless in your sight,
In a mute apocalypse;
With dumb vibrations on our lips,
  From hosannas ended;
  And grand half-vanishings
  Of the foregone things,
Within our eyes, belated:
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from our Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opening into ministration.

Chorus.

Then in odes of burning,
  Brake we suddenly,
And sang out the morning
  Broadly up the sky.—
  Or we drew
  Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
And taught them our intense Divine—
With our vital fiery notes
All disparted hither, thither,
Trembling out into the æther,—
Sensible like beamy motes!—
  Or, as twilight drifted
  Through the cedar masses,
  The globed sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
  Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
  To anthems slowly sung!
While he, aweary and in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune

Pierce the faint stars' concentric rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and* LUCIFER *enters.*

Luc. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam! hold
My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
And leave us to the desert thou hast made
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime
Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,
Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Luc. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve
Who thought me once part worthy of her ear,
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Their stedfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And, down from her white heights of womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt:
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn,
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Luc. Our new gods, methinks,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies:
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery,

From all the wandering visions of the world,—
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.
Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both!
Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.
Luc. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly! [*Aside.*
Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed,
When we were happy by them. So, depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face
To find there the communion of the dust
And issue of the curse.—Go.
Adam. At once, go.
Luc. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
To-day—what?
Adam. A strong spirit.
Eve. A sad spirit.
Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say?
Luc. Who told thee, Adam?
Adam. *Thou!* The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes,
Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
Under the eyes of God.
Luc. And why of God?
Adam. It were no crown else. Verily, I think
Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday

Said it so surely; but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin!

Luc. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I knew:
Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Luc. Because?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million years,
Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Luc. Who is high and bold—
Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower
Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!
Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Luc. Ha, my clay-king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs;
Classing these present dogmas with the rest
Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
And saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more:
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone.—Go.

Luc. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's gate,—
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!
And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Luc. Nothing more?

Eve. I think no more.

Luc. False Heart—thou thinkest more!
Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word
Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved,
When that august work of a perfect shape,
His dignities of sovran angelhood,
Swept out into the universe,—divine
With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings:—
Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here; nor even my crown—
I do not know. What is this thought or thing
Which I call beauty? is it thought, or thing?
Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my perceptions reel
For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty, I call love.
The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colourless,
Is nothing to the eye; that pine-tree there,
Without its black and green, being all a blank;
So, without love, is beauty undiscerned

In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
And what collateral love moves on with thee;
Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.
Luc. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love!
I darken to the image. Beauty—Love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.
Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
And, hark! the starry harmony remote.
Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.
Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.
Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death!
Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!
How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulations.*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet, and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.
Adam. Now, words.

SONG, OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orbed image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.
O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

I loved thee, with the fiery love of stars,
Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah, not to love.
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars.
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Mine orbed heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.
Ai, ai!
Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,
And flooded me with radiance overmuch
From thy pure height.
Ai, ai!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,
Erect, irradiated,
Didst sting my wheel of glory
On, on before thee,
Along the Godlight, by a quickening touch!
Ha, ha!
Around, around the firmamental ocean,
I swam expanding with delirious fire!
Around, around, around, in blind desire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—
Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,—
To a blind whirl of rapture and delight,—
I wound in gigant orbits, smooth and white

With that intense rapidity!
Around, around,
I wound and interwound,
While all the cyclic heavens about me spun!
Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one,
And as they wound I wound,—around, around
In a great fire, I almost took for God!
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee!
O my light bearer,
O my path preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou:
All things are altered since that time ago—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know—
I am strange—I am slow!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me
Ai, ai!
When, having wept all night, at break of day,
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.
Ai, ai!
And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?
Eve. Nay.
Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a sound;
And shapes, which have no certainty of shape,
Drift duskly in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve. O Life
Which is not man's nor angel's! What is this?
Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beside.
Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense
Of those first laws affixed to form and space
Or ever she knew sin!
Adam. We will not fear:
We were brave sinning.
Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to Heaven, and seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not GOD.
My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.
Adam. Night is near.
Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back,
And stand within the sword-glare till we die,
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.
Adam. Nay, beloved!
We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple: we must wait
Until He gives death, as He gave us life;
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift,
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou discern what I behold?
Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes,
From their dilated orbits, bound before
To meet the spectral Dread!
Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah! The twilight bristles wild with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
How near they reach . . . and far! How grey they move—
Treading upon the darkness without feet,—
And fluttering on the darkness without wings!
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground;
Some keep one path, like sheep; some rock like trees;
Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some flow on,
Copious as rivers.
Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .
Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou pause to say
Like what?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of his height,
And writhed,—and could not climb against the curse,
Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
That didst permit the angels to go home,
And live no more with us who are not pure;
Save *us* too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away
From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such, through the precedence
Of earth's adjusted uses,—evermore
To doubt, betwixt our senses and our souls,
Which are the most distraught, and full of pain,
And weak of apprehension.
Adam. Courage, sweet!
The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—

Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation; till the throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms, vague and grand,
Which sweep out and around us vastily,
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there are twelve.
Thou, who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,
Which rounds us with its visionary dread,—
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
In fantasque apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God,
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
In twelve colossal shades, instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,—
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
Thy terror of the shadows;—what is known
Subduing the unknown, and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion,—albeit, twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar

Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane!
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself;
A bull stands horned here with gibbous glooms;
And a ram likewise; and a scorpion writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the dark!
This way a goat leaps, with wild blank of beard;
And here, fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out slow rhythms along the shallow air!
While images more human——

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou!*
Two phantasms of two men!

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives!—resuming, so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labour.* Dost thou see
That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen—
But look off to those small humanities,†
Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand
They lean together! I would gaze on them
Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,—
As the stars do in watching anything,—
Should light them forward from their outline vague,
To clear configuration—

Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,—
And thrust me into horror, back from hope!

* Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,—
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces!—with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.
O bleak sound!
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound!
How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail,
Around the cyclic zodiac; and gains force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us; whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament—
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth;
God spake me softly out among the stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth,—
And then, His smile did follow unawares,
That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
Might shine anointed with His chrism of beauty—
Yet I wail!
I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
Individual aspect and complexity
Of giratory orb and interval,
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being, beyond sight—
Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
And tasted, in each drop within the measure,
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—
Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life, around His lips,
  Bore witness to the fulness of creation!
How all the grand words were full laden ships;
  Each sailing onward, from enunciation,
To separate existence,—and each bearing
The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing!—
      Yet I wail!

Eve. They wail, beloved! they speak of glory and God,
And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
Into the lap of silence!

Adam. Hark, again!

First Spirit.
I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
  My joy stood up within me bold and glad,
To answer God,—and, when His work was full,
  To "very good," responded "very glad!"
Filtered through roses, did the light inclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—
      Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.
I bounded with my panthers! I rejoiced
  In my young tumbling lions, rolled together!
My stag—the river at his fetlocks—poised
  Then dipped his antlers, through the golden weather,
In the same ripple which the alligator
Left in his joyous troubling of the water—
      Yet I wail!

First Spirit.
O my deep waters, cataract and flood,—
  What wordless triumph did your voices render!
O mountain-summits, where the angels stood,
  And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour;
How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye were worthy!—
      Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.
O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes!
  My horses—my ground eagles, for swift fleeing!
My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,—
  My calm cold fishes of a silver being,—

How happy were ye, living and possessing,
O fair half-souls, capacious of full blessing!—
Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge to-day,
Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers,
By God's sword at your backs! I lent my clay
To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers:
And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured?
Accursed transgressors! down the steep ye hasten,—
Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do ye hear that I wail?
I had no part in your transgression—none!
My roses on the bough did bud, not pale—
My rivers did not loiter in the sun:
I was obedient. Wherefore, in my centre,
Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter!—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I shriek in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded!
My nightingale sang sweet without a fault,
My gentle leopards innocently bounded;
We were obedient—what is this convulses
Our blameless life with pangs and fever-pulses?—
And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out, and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty

Curls round us, like a river cold and drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling, like
The rugged foam along the ocean-waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against each other;—
The elements moan round me—"Mother, mother"—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
That we should fall from bliss, as ye from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth—
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives—
Inferior creatures, but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth,
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us,
To give rebuke or death; and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye, who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge,
Such as the Heavens have made yours Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did, to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore,
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak—
I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?
I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
My king, if not the world's?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—
. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!
I pray you humbly in the name of God,
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
From the wronged to the wronger; this and no more;
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars; or watch the vales,
Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy;
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
Work out their bubbling lengths beneath the ground,—
And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song,
They lift their trembling wings, as if to heave
The too-much weight of music from their heart,
And float it up the æther! I am 'ware
That these things I can no more apprehend,
With a pure organ, into a full delight;
The sense of beauty and of melody
Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,—
But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed,
By my percipiency of sin and fall,
And melancholy of humiliant thoughts.
But oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
Must evermore subdue me; be content—
Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick
As watering dews of Eden, unreproached;
And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
And peradventure better, while more sad.

For look to it, sweet Spirits—look well to it—
It will not be amiss in you who kept
The law of your own righteousness, and keep
The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
To pity me twice fallen,—from that, and this,—
From joy of place, and also right of wail,—
"I wail" being not for me—only "I sin."
Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—
For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it became
Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
Along our swarded garden, but the grass
Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive,
With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
Because I stood there? Could I turn to look
With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much woe, to cry "alas!"
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
To have stretched mine hand, and plucked it from the tree,
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this
Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Hearken, Spirits!
Our God, who is the enemy of none,
But only of their sin,—hath set your hope
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
Shew reverence, then,—and never bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme reproach;

Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us,
Of sovranty by reason and freewill,
Sinning against the province of the Soul
To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
And pass out from her presence with no words.
Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart,—
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,—
And let me speak; for, not being innocent,
It little doth become me to be proud;
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promise set upon me, that henceforth,
Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happiness—
Happy, as I have said, to look around—
Clear to look up!—And now! I need not speak—
Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,—
Because ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making! Alas,—peace foregone,—
Love wronged,—and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that best,
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
What word metes absolute loss? let absolute loss
Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world!
I, reigning the earth's empress, yesterday,
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers!
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
Composed and glad, as singing-birds the sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, "God,"
And hear Him make reply, "What is thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day?"
Adam. Eve!
Eve. *I*, at last,
Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity us,

Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow
With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our brows;
And stroking with mild airs, our harmless hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER *rises in the circle.*

Luc. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
Who taught you disobedience. Look around;—
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk, unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again, and talked!
What are your words to them? your griefs to them?
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Luc. Ay, that is true. The clay-king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. And certes, *that* is true.
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou universe,
That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God,
And could not see Him;—wretched Lucifer!
Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!
Earth Spirits. I wail—wail!
Luc. (*After a pause.*) Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
And his mane listening. When the ended curse
Left silence in the world,—right suddenly
He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes,—and roared so fierce,
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)—
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
In savage and in sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height,
Hid by the dark-orbed pines.
Adam. It might have been.
I heard the curse alone.
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!
Luc. That lion is the type of what I am!
And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
And roared, O Adam—comprehending doom,
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here, between the Heavens and earth,
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
Which damn me to this depth
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!
Eve. I wail—O God!
Luc. I scorn you that ye wail,
Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis

Of what ye *were*, forsooth, and what ye are;—
I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry,
I, too, would drive up, like a column erect,
Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
A monument of anguish, to transpierce
And overtop your vapory complaints
Expressed from feeble woes!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,
The outcast, and the mildew of things good,
The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest alike
Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
His blessing for chief angels, on my head,
Until it grew there, a crown crystallised!
Ask, if He never called me by my name
Lucifer—kindly said as "Gabriel"—
Lucifer—soft as "Michael!" while serene
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered "my Father," innocent of shame
And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
And would tread down my own offences, back
To service at the footstool? *That's* read wrong.
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep
Against the sides of this prodigious pit,
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail,
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs,
In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
To your own conscience, by the dread extremes

Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
It is a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
Strewn woolly soft with promise; if ye have sinned,
Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye have grieved,
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable;
The power to die disproves the right to grieve.
Go to! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,
Hated and tempted, and undone of me,—
Still, what's your hurt to mine, of doing hurt,
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
The hand that wields it.
                                        Go—I curse you all.
Hate one another—feebly—as ye can;
I would not certes cut you short in hate—
Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,
And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath
The branches very bare.—Beseech you, give
To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I trow,
For justice' sake, gave theirs.
                                        I curse you both
Adam and Eve! Say grace as after meat,
After my curses. May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
Ye and your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
And hideous forms of life and fears of death,
The thought of death being alway eminent,
Immovable, and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,—
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
And He find no redemption—nor the wing

Of seraph move your way—and yet rejoice!
Rejoice,—because ye have not set in you
This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
Which glares without, because it burns within—
Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
To God and His reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe,
With the great woe of striving against Love—
And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony
Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate love,
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the To come—
Go and rejoice! I curse you! [LUCIFER *vanishes.*

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
Which can lean to you aright.
When your bodies take the guerdon
Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you:
Then ye shall not move an eyelid,
Though the stars look down your eyes;
And the earth, which ye defiled,
She shall show you to the skies,—
"Lo! these kings of ours—who sought to comprehend you."

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain;
Unresistedly and coldly,
I will smite you with my rain!
From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
O'er the noble human heart!
Give him counsel against losing of that Eden!

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife;
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though undone,
Not unmade for love and life.
Lo! ye utter words in vain!
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire;
By the pinings which disclose
That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose, -
We are yet too high, O spirits, for your disdain

Eve. Nay, beloved! If these be low,
We confront them with no height,
We have stooped down to their level
In working them that evil;
And their scorn that meets our blow,
Scathes aright.
Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly,
When ye lie beneath the sward!
There, our lily shall grow stately,
Though ye answer not a word—
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence;
While, your throne, ascending calmly,
We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean, roll,
With the thoughts that throbbed within you—round the islands.

Earth.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will:
With the grandeur of your spirit,
Shall our broad savannahs fill—
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing:

Even your parlance which inveigles,
By our rudeness, shall be won!
Hearts poetic in our eagles,
Shall beat up against the sun,
And pour downward, in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth,
With his thunderous jaw, shall wield!
Your high fancies, shall our Mammoth
Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael, at God's throne, who waits to speed him,
Till the heavens' smooth-grooved thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them clear,
And the angels, smiling wonder,
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye exceed him!"

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary ground.
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by *these.*

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these.*

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy,
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth; and my heart
Hath beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full,
As when I plucked it—*Is* it?—ye may see!
I cast it down to you that ye may see,
All of you!—count the petals lost of it—
And note the colours fainted! ye may see:
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth!
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth zodiac-wind, filling the circle with its presence, and then wailing off into the east, carries the flower away with it. EVE *falls upon her face.* ADAM *stands erect.*

Adam. So, verily,
The last departs.
Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"
And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love."
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me.
Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns completed life,
Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee
For others; if for others, then for thee,—
For thee and me.

[The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden flower, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves,
To feel the mystic wind—Hark!
Eve. I hear life.
Infant voices passing in the wind.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into,
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange, that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches.
In a sorrow and delight—
Yet is it all in vain?
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.
Youthful voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which, with pulses manifold,

Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
  Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,—
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
  At the lifting of the anchor—
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.
  Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air,
That its beauty may be plain:
With a breathing and a flooding
  Of the heaven life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
  To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain?

Infant voices passing.
  Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we perceive
Is a strong thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
  Of the right against the wrong,—
We are earnest-hearted teachers
  Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain?

Infant voices passing.
  Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,

And made worthy of disdain!
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine;—
For is all laughed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life!

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
Scarlet to paleness; and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups; and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words, or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life?
Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near;
Sowing the fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.
[EVE *sinks down again.*

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we believe
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily,
To view God without a stain;
Till, recoiling where the shade is,
We retread our steps again,
And descend to gloomy Hades,
To resume man's mortal pain—
Shall it be climbed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve
Is a faithful thing apart,
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
'Wilt thou be one with me?'
'I will be one with thee!'
'Ha, ha!—we love and live!'
Alas! ye love and die!—
Shriek—who shall reply?
For is it not loved in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain—
Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain. [*Voices die away.*

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity
Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,—
In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest, with feet and wings,—
Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits.

Agreed; allowed!
We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus, and thus!
Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the east wind blows bleakly in the norland,—
As the snow-wind beats blindly on the moorland,—
As the simoom drives wild across the desert,—
As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,—
As the torrent tears an ocean-world to atoms,—
As the whirlpool grinds fathoms below fathoms,—
Thus,—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,—
As the tiger, in the jungle, crouching stilly,—
As the wild-boar, with ragged tusks of anger,—
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,—
As the vultures that scream against the thunder,—
As the owlets that sit and moan asunder,—
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Ye cruel, cruel, unrelenting Spirits!
By the power in me of the sovran soul,
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angels' march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

Earth Spirits. Ha, ha! thou art king!
With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone:
Thou, who antagonised,
Tortured and agonised,
Art held in the ring
Of the zodiac!
Now, king, beware!
We are many and strong,
Whom thou standest among,—
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where
Thou wouldst trample us down
From rights of our own,
To an utter wrong—
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn!
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee! I make appeal
Unto Thy kingship.
Eve. There is pity in Thee,
O sinned against, great God!—My Seed, my Seed,
There is hope set on Thee—I cry to Thee,
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be!—leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
Fallen in debasement below thunder-mark;
A mark for scorning—taunted and perplext
By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom Thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my Seed,
Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,
Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head.

[*A vision of* CHRIST *appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth Spirits grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. Lo, I AM HERE!
Adam. This is God!—Curse us not, God, any more.
Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!
Or lift it only—not to seem too proud—
To the low height of some good angel's feet,—
For such to tread on, when he walketh straight,
And Thy lips praise him.
CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned;
And true, their sin is reckoned into loss
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
With instincts and imperious sanctities,
From self-defacement? Which of you disdains
These sinners, who, in falling, proved their height
Above you, by their liberty to fall?
And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honour in creation. Ponder it!

This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,—
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,—
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this rule
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
Devouring; tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, "Why, God, hast Thou made us thus?"
And, pining to a sallow idiocy,
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,
Then stagnate into rottenness, and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore, over you,
Accept this sceptre; therefore, be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And service in you, to this sceptred hand.
Be ye to man as angels be to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest. So, at last,
He shall look round on you, with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well;
And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you when he sings his open songs,
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you,
Of purifying sweetness; and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies,
Which glorify you into soul from sense!
Go, serve him for such price. That not in vain,
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through the peace,
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou bless me not

In set words, I am blessed in hearkening Thee—
Speak, Christ.
CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
It is thine office.
Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Lo! my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express—
God breathing through my breath—the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name;
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, rise, aspire
Unto the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses, and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.
Eve. And first in sin.
Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth! Raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world. Rise, woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,—
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness.
The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve;
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood—
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin;
Some pang paid down for each new human life;
Some weariness in guarding such a life—

Some coldness from the guarded; some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served; from those beloved
Too loyally, some treason: feebleness
Within thy heart,—and cruelty without;
And pressures of an alien tyranny,
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child's kiss,
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad:
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich;
A sick man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close;
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,—
I bless thee in the name of Paradise,
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost;—by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out;
And by the blessed nightingale, which threw
Its melancholy music after us;—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
And fourfold river-courses:—by all these,
I bless thee to the contraries of these;
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to this END
Of Death and the hereafter!

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high part,
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest;
And in the place of Eden's lost delight,

Worthy endurance of permitted pain;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
Shall it be so? Shall *I* smile, saying so?
O Seed! O King! O God, who *shalt* be Seed,—
What shall I say? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt Thy love and power!
And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden! now, for the first time
Since God said "Adam," walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you, as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,—
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.
Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illume it, holdest Heaven
Broadly above our heads.

[*The* CHRIST *is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.
Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ.
Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
Diviner, with the possible of Death.
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.
Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls,
As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne,
In a pathetical, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other.
Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon.
CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
And grand dim lips, that murmur evermore
God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,—

The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
Of the ancient atoms, and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamental waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—God!
Which WORD, innumerous angels straightway lift
High on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly; shutting the last notes
Hushed up in silver wings! I' the noon of time,
Nathless, that mystic-lipped Eternity
Shall wax as silent-dumb as Death himself,
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
"God! why hast Thou forsaken me, my God?"
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies; yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and face!
Eve. My nature overcomes me from Thine eyes.
CHRIST. Then, in the noon of time, shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements;
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea;
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.
Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee!
I thank thee for that woman!
CHRIST. For, at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs
I will confront your sins: and since your sins

Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,
The tears of my clean soul shall follow them,
And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
Your discrowned human nature. Look on me!
As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
The whole creation. Henceforth in my name
Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope!
Your graves shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts
And, one step past them, a new Eden-gate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
First sinners and first mourners. Live and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowlily;
Live and work, strongly,—because patiently!
And, for the deed of death, trust it to God,
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence, with constant prayers
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain!

[*The vision of* CHRIST *vanishes.* ADAM *and* EVE *stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing;
And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;
Here, we promise milder duty;
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organise in beauty,
A sabbath day in sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us;
If this mortal and unholy,
We still fail to cast out from us,
And we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences;

If ye tremble, when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm trees;
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our marjoram and balm trees;
And if your souls, all mournfully, sit down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,—
We are gentle in our languor;
And more good ye shall have near us,
Than any pain or anger;
And our God's refracted blessing, in our blessing, shall be given!

By the desert's endless vigil,
We will solemnise your passions;
By the wheel of the black eagle,
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature;
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death, and straight and slumberful:

Then, a couch we will provide you,
Where no summer heats shall dazzle;
Strewing on you and beside you
Thyme and rosemary and basil—
And the cypress shall grow overhead to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us running,
Whereby, newly consecrated,
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company, where the pure worlds assemble;

While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels—
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious;
And the rays around His feet, beneath your sobbing lips, shall tremble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac has broken like a belt, and dissolved from the desert. The Earth Spirits vanish; and the stars shine out above, bright and mild.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM *and* EVE *advance into the desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise,
Through your mortal passion!
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation!
As a fish or bird
Swims or flies, if moving,
We, unseen, are heard
To live on by loving.
Far above the glances
Of your eager eyes,
Listen! we are loving!
Listen, through man's ignorances—
Listen, through God's mysteries—
Listen down the heart of things,
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving!
Through the opal door,
Listen evermore
How we live by loving.

First semichorus.

When your bodies, therefore,
  Lie in grave or goal,
Softly will we care for
  Each enfranchised soul!
Softly and unloathly,
  Through the door of opal,
We will draw you soothly
  Towards the Heavenly people.
Floated on a minor fine
Into the full chant divine,
  We will draw you smoothly,—
While the human in the minor
Makes the harmony diviner:
    Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

What a sough of glory
  Shall your entrance greet,
Ruffling, round the doorway,
  All the radiance it shall meet!
From the Heavenly throned centre
  Heavenly voices shall repeat—
"Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter;
  For the chrism on you is sweet."
And every angel in the place
Lowlily shall bow his face,
  Folded fair on softened sounds,
Because upon your hands and feet
  He images his Master's wounds!
    Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
  Consummated undoing,
Our angels of white mercies
  Shall hover round the ruin!
Their wings shall stream upon the flame,
As if incorporate of the same,
  In elemental fusion;
And calm their faces shall burn out,
With a pale and mastering thought,

And a stedfast looking of desire,
From out between the clefts of fire,—
While they cry, in the Holy's name,
To the final Restitution!
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
To the thick graves accompted;
Awaking the dead bodies,
The angel of the trumpet
Shall split the charnel earth
To the roots of the grave,
Which never before were slackened;
And quicken the charnel birth,
With his blast so clear and brave;
Till the Dead shall start and stand erect,
And every face of the burial place,
The awful, single look, reflect,
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death!
He will leap up wild at the clamour
Above and beneath;
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha!
To the trumpet's blare,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And ghastily champeth the last moon-ray,—
What angel there
Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second Semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
One more bright than seraph crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold;
Elder, too, than angel old,

By His grey eternities,—
He shall master and surprise
The steed of Death,
For He is strong, and He is fain;
He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where He will,
With a whisper in the ear,
Which it alone can hear—
Full of fear—
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades, where the souls assemble,
He will guide the Death-steed, calm between their ranks;
While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades, where the dreary shade is,—
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles—circle above circle,
We, who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed, with tolling hoofs, shall travel,
Ashen grey the planets shall be motionless as stones;
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,—
Stagnant in the spaces, shall float the pallid moons;
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
Shall the horse's nostrils steam the blurting breath;
Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne:
"Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am Thy Son."
Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,

On the mystic courser, shall look out in fire:
Blind the beast shall stagger, where It overcame him,—
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in desire—
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
And by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

A Voice. Gabriel, thou Gabriel!
Another Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me?
First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song;
And I would give thee question.
Second Voice. Question me.
First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my Morning Star
And had no answer? All the stars are out,
And round the earth, upon their silver lives,
Wheel out the music of the inner life,
And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of *my* Star, shut in light behind the sun!
No more reply than from a breaking string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?
Where *is* my Star—my Star? Have ye cast down
Her glory like my glory? Has she waxed
Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to hate
Like any angel?
Second Voice. She is sad for thee:
All things grow sadder to thee, one by one
Angel chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy!
By the Actual's tension.
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension,
From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you;
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you!
God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!
Second Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me?
First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims?
That HE claims THAT too?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.
First Voice. That HE will be an exile from His Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. That HE will be an exile by His will,
As I by mine election?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. That *I* shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. Gabriel!
Second Voice. I hearken.
First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient Star will give
Her name of "Bright and Morning-Star" to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue back,
To cover loss and sadness?
Second Voice. It is true.
First Voice. UNtrue, UNtrue! O Morning-Star! O MINE!
Who sittest secret in a veil of light,
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters! I am Lucifer—
[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*

All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

Angel chorus.

Exiled Human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger!
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger;
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden
In a light exceeding:
What their rays have measured,
Let your hearts fulfil!

These are stars beholden
  By your eyes in Eden;
Yet, across the desert,
  See them shining still.

Chorus. Future joy and far light
  Working such relations,
Hear us singing gently—
  Exiled is not lost!
God, above the starlight,
  God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
  Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
  Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you—
  Hope the uttermost—
Waiting for that curing
  Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
  EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

[*The stars shine on brightly, while* ADAM *and* EVE *pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.*



The Seraphim.

"I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry."
GILES FLETCHER.

PART THE FIRST.

[*It is the time of the Crucifixion: and the Father of the Crucified has directed towards earth the angels of His heaven, of whom all have departed except the two Seraphim, Ador the Strong and Zerah the Bright One.*
The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.]

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more!
Beside this gate of Heaven we stand alone.
Zerah. Of Heaven!
Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—
Zerah. Are gone!
Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore
To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands of fire,
Lie without touch or tone,
Or canopy of angel wing,
Upon the glass-sea shore.
Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!
Ador. Instead of sounding, glittering
In the shadow from the throne—
The shadow without form, that meets
The edges of the crystal sea—
Awfuller than light derived,
And red with all those primal heats,
Whereby all life hath lived.
Zerah. Our visible God, our Heaven! and we
Go thus!

Ador. Thus, now; unpausingly.
Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,
Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—
The roar of whose descent hath died
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.
Immeasurable space spreads magnified
With that thick life, along the plane
The worlds slid out on. What a fall
And eddy of wings innumerous, crossed
By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed
On each bowèd angel's head!
And gleamed between by hands that fling
Up homage, like retorted rays,
From high instinct of worshipping,
And habitude of praise.

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.
Pointed palm and wing and hair,
Indistinguishable, show us
Only pulses in the air
Throbbing with a fiery beat;—
As if a new creation heard
(Late unhearing, still unseeing)
Some divine and plastic word,
And trembling at its proper being,
Did waken at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait to see.
His voice—the voice that thrills us so
As we our harpstrings—uttered *Go,*
Behold the Holy in His woe—
And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne,
What time the voice said *Go.*
And whether I was moved alone
By the storm-pathos of the tone
Which swept through Heaven the alien name of *woe,*
Or that the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding wings,
Bearing to my finite essence
Incapacious of their presence,
Infinite imaginings—

None knoweth save the Throned who spoke
But I, who, at creation, stood upright
And heard the God Breath move,
Shaping the words that lightened – "Be there light,"
Nor trembled but with love,
Now fall down tremblingly,
My face upon the pavement whence I towered;
As if that mine immortal were o'erpowered
By God's eternity!
Zerah. Let me wait! let me wait!
Ador. Oh, gaze not backward thro' the gate!
God fills our heaven with God's own solitude
Till all its pavements glow.
His Godhead being no more subdued
By itself, to glories low
Which seraphs can sustain
What if thou, in gazing so,
Shouldst behold but only one
Attribute, the veil undone—
And that the one to which we press
Nearest, for its gentleness—
Ay, His love!
How the deep ecstatic pain
Thy being's strength would capture!
Without a language for the rapture,
Without a music strong to come
And set the adoration free,
For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
Amid the general chorus dumb,
God-stricken to seraphic agony!—
Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
In vision bare should rise
The life fount, whence His hand did gather
With solitary force
Our immortalities!
Straightway how thine own would wither,
Falter like a human breath,
And shrink into a point like death,
By gazing on its source!
My words have imaged dread.
Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
And dropt thy wings in languishment,

Overclouding foot and face;
As if God's throne were eminent
Before thee, in the place.
Yet not—not so,
O loving spirit and meek, dost thou fulfil
All motions of the one pre-eminent Will
Which stirreth unto will and act our natures,
As human souls do stir the fleshly creatures.
Not for obeisance, but obedience,
Give motion to thy wings! Depart from hence—
The voice said "Go."

Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
His will is as a spirit within my spirit;
A portion of the being I inherit—
His will is mine obedience. I resemble
A flame all undefiled though it tremble—
I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!
O thou, who stronger art,
And standest ever near the Infinite,
Pale with excelling light!
Love me, beloved! me, more newly made.
More feeble, more afraid—
And let me hear with mine thy pinions moved,
As close and gentle as the loving are;
That love being near, heaven may not seem so far.

Ador. I am near thee, and I love thee.
Were I loveless, from thee gone,
Love is round, beneath, above thee—
God, the omnipresent One.
Spread the wing, and lift the brow—
Well-beloved, what fearest thou?

Zerah. I fear, I fear—

Ador. What fear?

Zerah. The fear of earth.

Ador. Of earth, the God-create and beautiful?
From whence the sweet sea-music hath its birth,
And vernal forests lift their leaves in tune
Beneath the gracious, water-leading moon?
Where every night, the stars do put away
Meekly its darkness dull,
And look their spirit-light into the clay?
Where every day, the kingly sun doth bless

More lovingly than kings,
And stir to such harmonious happiness
All leafed and reeded things,
It seems as if the joyous shout which burst
From angel lips to see him first,
Had left a silent echo in his ray?
Zerah. Of earth—the God-create and God-accurst:
Where man is, and the thorn:
Where winds and waves have borne,
Where sun and star can roll,
No tune, no shining to the human soul:
Where Eden's lapsing rivers all are dry,
And in their stead, do flow perpetually,
Do flow and flow hot streams of human tears—
Where Eden's tree of life no more uprears
Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead
The yew-tree bows its melancholy head,
And all the undergrasses kills and seres.
Ador. A fear of earth, the weak?
Where men that faint, do strive for crowns that fade;
And stoop to clasp metallic heaps conveyed
From the [illegible] sward their delving labour scars—
When upright they might stand, and view the stars?
Where, having won the winning which they seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the gold,
With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold;
And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?
Zerah. Of earth the terrible:
Where the blind matter brings
An awful potence out of impotence,
And all the spiritual prostrated lies,
Before the things of sense:
Where the strong human will saith "ay" or "no,"
Because the human pulse is quick or slow—
Where stronger Love succumbeth unto Change,
With only his own memories, for revenge;
And where the fearful mystery—
Ador. Called Death?
Zerah. Nay! Death is fearful; but who saith
"To die," is comprehensible.
What's fearfuller, thou knowest well,
Though its utterance be not for thee,

Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Ay! the cursed thing that moved
Its shadow of ill, long times ago,
Across our heaven's own shining floor!
And when it vanished, some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign—were seen—were—never more.
Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee
Ever to this earth?

Zerah. Before!
When thrilling from His hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song,
The earth was deathless, sorrowless.
Then, fearless, angel feet might press
The grasses brightening with their feet
For God's own voice did mix its sound
In a solemn confluence oft
With the river's flowing round,
And the life tree's waving soft.
Beautiful new earth, and strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—the change?

Zerah. Nay! or wherefore should I fear
To look upon it now?
I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings
Of angels sent on earthward mission;
Strong one, e'en upon thy brow,
When, with task completed, given
Back to us, in that transition
I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band—
Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wert not one of those
Whom the loving Father chose,
In visionary pomp to sweep
O'er Judæa's grassy places,
O'er the shepherds and the sheep,—
Though thou art so tender?—dimming
All the stars except one star,
With their brighter, kinder faces;
And using heaven's own tune in hymning,—

While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,—
"Peace upon earth—goodwill to man."
Zerah. "Glory to God!"—I said Amen afar.
And they who from that earthward mission are,
Within mine ears have told,
That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
With such a sweet and prodigal constraint,
The meaning yet the mystery of the song,
The while they sang it, on their natures strong;
That, gazing down on earth's dark stedfastness,
And speaking the new peace in promises,
The love and pity made their voices faint
Into that low and tender music, keeping
The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping.
Ador. Peace upon earth! Come down to it.
Zerah. Ah me
I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
Peace where the tempest—where the sighing is—
And worship of the idol, 'stead of His?
Ador. Yea, peace, where *He* is.
Zerah. *He!*
Say it again.
Ador. Where *He* is.
Zerah. Can it be
That earth retains a tree
Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed
By breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?
Ador. There is a tree! - it hath no leaf nor root;
Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:
Its shadow on His head is laid.
For He, the crowned Son,
Hath left His crown and throne,—
Walks earth in Adam's clay,
Eve's snake to bruise and slay –
Zerah. Walks earth in clay?
Ador. And walking in the clay which He created,
He through it shall touch death.
What do I utter? what, conceive? did breath
Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?
Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated,
By the seven confluent Spirits?—Speak—answer me!
Who said man's victim was his Deity?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from thee.
Thine eyes are rolling in tempestuous light,
Above, below, around,
As putting thunder-questions without cloud,
Reverberate without sound,
To universal nature's depth and height.
The tremor of an inexpressive thought
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips:
And while thine hands are stretched above
As newly they had caught
Some lightning from the Throne—or showed the Lord
Some retributive sword--
Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
And radiance—with contrasted wrath and love—
As God had called thee to a seraph's part,
With a man's quailing heart..
Ador. O heart—O heart of man!
O ta'en from human clay,
To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's own!
Made holy in the taking,
And yet unseparate
From death's perpetual ban,
And human feelings sad and passionate!
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
Of other hearts, and its own stedfast pain!
O heart of man—of God! which God hath ta'en
From out the dust, with its humanity.
Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,
And bade its many pulses beating lie
Beside that incommunicable stir
Of Deity wherewith He interwound it.
O man! and is thy nature so defiled,
That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,
And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
For traitors who consigned it to such woe—
That all could cleanse thee not—without the flow
Of blood—the life-blood—*His*—and streaming so?
O earth, the thundercleft, windshaker!—where
The louder voice of "blood and blood" doth rise—
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?

O heaven—O vacant throne!
O crownèd hierarchies, that wear your crown
When His is put away!
Are ye unshamed, that ye cannot dim
Your alien brightness to be liker Him,—
Assume a human passion—and down-lay
Your sweet secureness for congenial fears—
And teach your cloudless ever-burning eyes
The mystery of His tears?
Zerah. I am strong, I am strong!
Were I never to see my Heaven again,
I would wheel to earth like the tempest rain
Which sweeps there with exultant sound
To lose its life as it reaches the ground.
I am strong, I am strong!
Away from mine inward vision swim
The shining seats of my heavenly birth—
I see but His, I see but Him—
The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet
To me, as trodden by His feet?
Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
As worn by Him, begin to be
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
For love, and awe, and ministering?
I am strong, I am strong!
By our angel ken, shall we survey
His loving smile through His woeful clay?
I am swift, I am strong—
The love is bearing me along.—
Ador. One love is bearing two along.

PART THE SECOND.

[*Mid-air, above Judæa.* Ador *and* Zerah *are a little apart from the visible Angelic Hosts.*]

Ador. Beloved! dost thou see?—
Zerah. Thee,—thee.
Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a star,

Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay,
Whereon thou lookest now!
The crown is fainting on thy brow
To the likeness of a cloud,
Thy forehead's self, a little bowed
From its aspect high and holy,
As it would in meekness meet
Some seraphic melancholy
Thy very wings that lately flung
An outline clear, do flicker here,
And wear to each a shadow hung,
Dropped across thy feet
In these strange contrasting glooms
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another

Ador Dost thou see?

Zerah Even so—I see
Our empyreal company,
Alone the memory of their brightness
Left in them, as in thee,
The circle upon circle, tier on tier
Piling earth's hemisphere
With heavenly infiniteness!
Above us and around,—
Straining the blue horizon like a bow
Their songful lips divorced from all sound,
A darkness gliding down their silvery glances—
Bowing their stedfast solemn countenances,
As if they heard God speak, and could not glow.

Ador Look downward! dost thou see?

Zerah And wouldst thou press *that* vision on my words?
Doth not the changed Earth
Speak loud enough of change and jeopardy
Without my witness? Her least rills
Do break away from their forced mirth,
With a long sigh across the pastoral swards.
Be satisfied I see her vales, ungreen,
Where steps of man have been,
Her thunder-riven hills,

That shake their piney heads, as who would say,
"We are too beautiful for our decay."
Shall seraphs speak of these things? Let alone
Earth, to her earthly moan.
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but *hers?*
Ador. Hearest thou the attestation
Of the roused Universe,
Like a desert lion shaking
Dews of silence from its mane
With an irrepressive passion,
Rising up, and witness making
To the earth-commingled pain
Of Him who stands (O patience sweet!)
In His own hand-prints of creation,
With human, bleeding feet?
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but *ours?*
Zerah. Forms, spaces, motions wide,
O meek, insensate things,
O congregated matters! who inherit,
Instead of motive powers,
Impulsions God-supplied—
Instead of vital spirit,
A clear informing beauty—
Instead of creature-duty,
Submission calm as rest!
Lights, without feet or wings,
In golden courses sliding!
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,
Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars!
Ye crystal, firmamental bars,
That hold the skyey waters free
From tide or tempest's ecstasy!
Airs universal! thunders lorn,
That wait your lightning in cloud-cave
Hewn out by the winds! O brave
And subtle Elements! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice with folly.*
Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its wound.
Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound!

* "His angels He charged with folly" (Job iv. 18).

Ador. Zerah.
Zerah. Wilt *thou* rebuke?
God hath rebuked me, brother.—I am weak.
Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah!—could I speak
Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.
Zerah. Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face!—
Where shall I seek *Him?*—
I have thrown
One look upon earth—but one—
Over the blue mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and pines;
Over the harvest-lands golden;
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines—
He is not there!
All these are unworthy
His footsteps to bear,—
Before which, bowing down,
I would fain quench the stars of my crown
In the dark of the earthy.
Where shall I seek Him?
No reply?
Hath language left thy lips, to place
Its vocal in thine eye?
Ador, Ador! are we come
To a double portent, that
Dumb matter grows articulate,
And songful seraphs dumb?
Ador, Ador!—
Ador. I constrain
The passion of my silence. None
Of those places gazed upon,
Are dull enow to fit His pain.
Unto Him, whose forming word
Gave to Nature flower and sward,
She hath given back again,
Instead of flowers, the thorn;
Instead of sylvan calms, the human scorn.
Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze beneath!
There is a city—
Zerah. Temple and tower,

Palace and purple would droop like a flower,
(As a cloud at our breath)
If He neared in His state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a King, did the victim go!
And THOU who hangest mute of speech,
'Twixt heaven and earth, with forehead yet
Stained by the bloody sweat—
God! man! Thou hast foregone Thy throne in each!

Zerah. Thine eyes behold Him?

Ador. Yea, below.
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart,
That its weakness may depart,
And the vision rise.
Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang thereon,
'Ghast and silent to the sun:
And round them blacken and welter and press
Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark;
Who curse with looks. Nay—let me rather
Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels; and they love.
Can these love? With the living's pride
They stare at those who die,—who hang
In their sight and die. They bear the streak
Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside
When the victims' pang
Makes the crosses creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels
The mid cross under—
With white lips asunder,
And motion on each:

They throb, as she feels,
With a spasm, not a speech;
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm—for the eyes
Have made room there to weep
Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,
All women, all men!
He sweated it, He,
For your pale womanhood
And weak manhood. Agree
That these water tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laughter!
Weep blood!—Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the darkness, on roll
Forward, on, from the strand of the decadent years—
And roll back from the rocks of the dreadful hereafter,
Roll up, in a coil, from the present's wrath spring;
Yea, down from the windows of Heaven opening,—
Deep calling to deep as they meet on His soul,—
And men weep only tears?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse!
And yet, Ador, perhaps
It is all that they can.
Tears! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all givers need gifts?
If the Giver said "Give," the first motion would slay
Our Immortals; the echo would ruin away
The same worlds which He made. Why, what angel uplifts
Such a music, so clear,
It may seem in God's ear
Worth more than a woman's soft weeping? And thus,
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would speak,
Thou woman that weepest! weep unscorned of us!
I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,— and not of love,
Or human or angelic! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme above,
In whose infinitude, the secrecies

Of thine own being lie hid,—and lift thine hand
Exultant, saying, "Lord God. I am wise!"—
Than utter *here*, "I love."

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender light—
The tears of Heaven.

Ador. Of Heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one
Is as a man who sinned, and still
Doth wear the wicked will—
The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change again.

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Has also sinned.
And yet, (O marvel!) doth the spirit-wind
Blow white those waters?—Death upon his face
Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made.
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?

Zerah. God! God!
Spirit of my spirit! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning deity,
To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod
The depths of love in Thy peculiar nature;
And not in any Thou hast made and lovest
In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator!
Within, Upholder!—

Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice!

Zerah. *Why do I pause?—*
Ador. There is a silentness
That answers thee enow;
That, like a brazen sound
Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round:
Hear it! It is not from the visible skies,
Though they are very still,
Unconscious that their own dropped dews express
The light of heaven on every earthly hill.
It is not from the hills; though calm and bare
They, since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air,
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place
Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,
And whence again shall come
The word that uncreates;
Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation.
It is not from the places that entomb
Man's dead—though common Silence there dilates
Her soul to grand proportions, worthily
To fill life's vacant room.
Not there—not there!
Not yet within their chambers lieth He,
A dead One in His living world! His south
And west winds blowing over earth and sea,
And not a breath on that creating Mouth!
But now,—a silence keeps.
(Not death's, nor sleep's),
The lips whose whispered word
Might roll the thunders round reverberated.
Silent art Thou, O my Lord,
Bowing down Thy stricken head!
Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine
Would make the pulse of Thy creation fail
As Thine own pulse?—would rend the veil
Of visible things, and let the flood
Of Unseen Light, essential God,
Rush in to whelm the undivine?—
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread!
Zerah. O silence!
Ador. Doth it say to thee—the NAME,
Slow-learning Seraph?

Zerah. I have learnt.
Ador. The flame
Perishes in thine eyes.
Zerah. He opened His—
And looked.—I cannot bear—
Ador. Their agony?
Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them. From His brows
White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?
He is God, Seraph! Look no more on me,—
O God; I am not God.
Ador. The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.
In Heaven we could sustain them.
Zerah. Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns
In fluent, refluent motion,
Unquenchably along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps between
The silver wings, in fountains of sweet sound—
The winding, wandering music that returns
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round
Of everlasting praises:
The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,
Visibly flashing from the súpreme throne,
Full in seraphic faces,
Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with glory and delight!
My heaven! my home of heaven! my infinite
Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,
Where God's immortal love now issueth
In this MAN's mortal woe?
Ador. His eyes are very deep, yet calm—
Zerah. No more
On *me*, Jehovah-man—
Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil. They are seeing
No earth, no heaven: no men, that slay and curse—
No seraphs that adore.

Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread—
The things we cannot view or think or speak,
Because we are too happy, or too weak;
The sea of ill, for which the universe,
With all its pilèd space, can find no shore,
With all its life, no living foot to tread.
But He, accomplished in Jehovah being,
            Sustains the gaze adown,
            Conceives the vast despair,
And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,—
Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails till all be finished.
  Zerah. Thus, do I find thee thus? My undiminished
And undiminishable God!— My God!—
The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the latest song
Thy manifested glory swept abroad,
In rushing past our lips! They echo aye
            "Creator, Thou art strong!—
Creator, Thou art blessed over all."
By what new utterance shall I now recall,
Unteaching the heaven-echoes? Dare I say,
"Creator, Thou art feebler than Thy work!
Creator, Thou art sadder than Thy creature!
            A worm, and not a man,—
            Yea, no worm—but a curse?"—
I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase reverse.
Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle fork
            (Whose seed disordered ran
From Eve's hand, trembling when the curse did reach her)
Be garnered darklier in thy soul! the rod
That smites Thee never blossoming,— and Thou,
Grief-bearer for Thy world, with unkinged brow—
I leave to men their song of Ichabod!
I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.
  Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise
The passion-song of blood.
  Zerah.   And *we*, extend
Our holy vacant hands towards the Throne,
Crying, "We have no music!"
  Ador.   Rather, blend
            Both musics into one!
The sanctities and sanctified above

Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,
Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath,
And breathe the fu'l thanksgiving.
Zerah. But the love—
The love, mine Ador!
Ador. Do we love not?
Zerah. Yea,
But not as man shall! not with life for death,
New-throbbing through the startled being! not
With strange astonished smiles, that ever may
Gush passionate like tears, and fill their place:
Nor yet with speechless memories of what
Earth's winters were, enverduring the green
Of every heavenly palm,
Whose windless, shadeless calm
Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.
Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face,—
Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore
In our behalf, and tender evermore
With nature all our own,—toward us gazing!—
Nor yet with these forgiving hands upraising
Their unreproachful wounds, alone to bless!
Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less
Than mortals shall?
Ador. Amen! so let it be.
We love in our proportion—to the bound
Thine infinite, our finite, set around,
And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite
And worthy infinite love! And our delight
Is watching the dear love poured out to Thee,
From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,
Who love Thee more than we do! blessed we,
Beholding that out-loving lovingness,
And winning in the sight, a double bliss,
For all so lost in love's supremacy!
The bliss is better! only on the sad
Cold earth, there are who say
It seemeth better to be great than glad.
The bliss is better! Love Him more, O man,
Than sinless seraphs can.
Zerah. Yea, love Him more.

Voices of the angelic multitude. Yea, more!
Ador. The loving word
Is caught by those from whom we stand apart:
For Silence hath no deepness in her heart.
Where love's low name low breathed, would not be heard
By angels, clear as thunder.
Angelic voices. Love Him more!
Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make!
Albeit to love, there were not ever given
A mournful sound, when uttered out of Heaven,
That angel-sadness, ye would fitly take.
Of love, be silent now! we gaze adown
Upon the Incarnate Love who wears no crown.
Zerah. No crown! the woe instead
Is heavy on His head,
Pressing inward on His brain,
With a hot and clinging pain,
Till all tears are prest away,
And clear and calm His vision may
Peruse the long abyss.
No rod, no sceptre is
Holden in His fingers pale:
They close instead upon the nail,
Concealing the sharp dole—
Never stirring to put by
The fair hair peaked with blood,
Drooping forward from the rood,
Helplessly—heavily—
On the cheek that waxeth colder,
Whiter ever,—and the shoulder
Where the government was laid.
His glory made the Heavens afraid—
Will He not unearth this cross from its hole?
His pity makes His piteous state:
Will He be uncompassionate
[illegible] to His proper soul?
Yea, will He not lift up
His lips from the bitter cup,
His brows from the dreary weight,
His hands from the clencking cross—

Crying, "My Father, give to me
Again the joy I had with Thee,
Or ere this earth was made for loss"?
No stir—no sound—
The love and woe being interwound,
He cleaveth to the woe;
And putteth forth Heaven's strength below—
To bear.

Ador. And that creates His anguish now,
Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it indeed be so?
Awake, thou Earth! behold!
Thou, uttered forth of old,
In all thy life-emotion,
In all thy vernal noises;
In the rollings of thine ocean,
Leaping founts, and rivers running;
In thy woods' prophetic heaving,
Ere the rains a stroke have given;
In thy wind's exultant voices
When they feel the hills anear:
In the firmamental sunning,
And the tempest which rejoices
Thy full heart with an awful cheer!
Thou! uttered forth of old,
And with all thy musics, rolled
In a breath abroad,
By the breathing God!
Awake! He is here! behold!—
Even *thou*—beseems it good
To thy vacant vision dim,
That the deathly ruin should,
For thy sake, encompass Him?
That the master-word should lie
A mere silence—while His own
Processive harmony—
The faintest echo of His lightest tone
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?
Awake! emit a cry!
And say, albeit used
From Adam's ancient years
To falls of acrid tears,—

To frequent sighs unloosed,
Caught back to press again
On bosoms zoned with pain—
To corses still and sullen
The shine and music dulling
With closed eyes and ears
That nothing sweet can enter—
Commoving thee no less
With that forced quietness
Than earthquakes in thy centre—
Thou hast not learnt to bear
This new divine despair!
These tears that sink into thee,
These dying eyes that view thee
This dropping blood from lifted rood,
They darken and undo thee!
Thou canst not presently sustain this corse!
Cry, cry, thou hast not force!
Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep
Thy hopeless charnels deep—
Thyself a general tomb
Where first and second Deaths
Sit gazing face to face
And mar each other's breath,
While silent bones through all the place,
'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten
And seem to lie and listen
For the tramp of the coming Doom
Is it not meet
That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,
Should champ the ashes?
That they who wrapt them in the thunder-cloud,
Should wear it as a shroud,
Perishing by its flashes?
That they who vexed the lion, should be rent?
Cry, cry—"I will sustain my punishment,
The sin being mine! but take away from me
This visioned Dread—this Man—this Deity."

The Earth I have groaned—I have travailed—I am weary—
I am blind with mine own grief, and cannot see,
As clear-eyed angels can, His agony:

And what I see, I also can sustain,
Because His power protects me from His pain.
I have groaned—I have travailed—I am dreary,
Hearkening the thick sobs of my children's heart:
And can I say "Depart,"
To that Atoner making calm and free?
Am I a God as He,
To lay down peace and power as willingly?

Ador. He looked for some to pity. There is none.
All pity is within Him, and not for Him;
His earth is iron under Him, and o'er Him
His skies are brass:
His seraphs cry "Alas!"
With hallelujah voice that cannot weep;
And man, for whom the dreadful work is done—

Scornful voices from the Earth. If verily this *be* the Eternal's Son—

Ador. Thou hearest:—man is grateful!

Zerah. Can I hear,
Nor darken into man? nor cease for ever
My seraph-smile to wear?
Was it for such,
It pleased Him to overleap
His glory with His love, and sever
From the God-light and the throne,
And all angels bowing down,
For whom His every look did touch
New notes of joy from the unworn string
Of an eternal worshipping!
For such He left His heaven?
There, though never bought by blood
And tears, we gave Him gratitude!
We loved Him there, though unforgiven!
The light is riven
Above, around,
And downwardly in lurid fragments flung,
That catch the mountain pinnacle and stream,
With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the ground!
River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together wrung

Into one shape, and that is shapelessness—
The darkness stands for all.
Ador. The pathos hath the day undone:
The death-look of His eyes
Hath overcome the sun,
And made it sicken in its narrow skies—
Is it to death?
Zerah. *He* dieth. Through the dark,
He still, He only, is discernible—
The naked hands and feet, transfixed stark,
The countenance of patient anguish white,
Do make, themselves, a light
More dreadful than the glooms which round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.
Ador. God! Father-God!
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant throne!
Uplift the lids of inward Deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning Infinite!
Light up this dark, where there is nought to see,
Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of Thy Son.
Zerah. God, tarry not! Behold, enow
Hath He wandered as a stranger,
Groaned as a victim. Thou,
Appear for Him, O Father!
Appear for Him, Avenger!
Appear for Him, just One and holy One,
For He is holy and just!
At once the darkness and the evil, scatter,
And from His being strike and break
And hurl aback to ancient dust,
These mortals that make blasphemies
With their made breath! this earth and skies
That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on Him!
But Him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt Thou forsake!
Thy living and Thy loving cannot slacken
Their firm essential hold upon each other—
And well Thou dost remember how His part

Was still to lie upon Thy breast, and be
Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee
Ere sun or seraph shone;
And how, while silence trembled round the throne,
Thou countedst by the beatings of His heart,
The moments of Thine own eternity!
Awaken,
O right Hand with the lightnings! Again gather
His glory to Thy glory! What estranger—
What ill most strong in evil, can be thrust
Between the faithful Father and the Son?
Appear for Him, O Father!
Appear for Him, Avenger!
Appear for Him, just One and holy One!
For He is holy and just.

Ador. Thy face, upturned toward the throne, is dark—
Thou hast no answer, Zerah.

Zerah. No reply,
O unforsaking Father?—

Ador. Hark!
Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath!

Zerah. And by a sharper sound than death,
Mine immortality is riven.
The heavy darkness which doth tent the sky,
Floats backward as by a sudden wind—
But I see no light behind:
But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,
And I know a shadow sad and broad
Doth fall—doth fall
On our vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the Cross. MY GOD, MY GOD,
WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?

The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me! the dreadful why!
My sin is on Thee, Sinless One! Thou art
God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy head.
Dark sin! white innocence! endurance dread!
Be still, within your shrouds, my buried dead—
Nor work with this quick horror round mine heart!

Zerah. *He* hath forsaken *Him!*—I perish—

Ador. Hold

Upon His name! We perish not. Of old
His will—
Zerah. I seek His will. Seek, Seraphim!
My God, my God! where is it? Doth that curse,
Reverberate, spare us, seraph or universe?
He hath forsaken *Him.*
Ador. He cannot fail.
Angel voices. We faint—we droop—
Our love doth tremble like fear—
Voices of Fallen Angels, from the earth. Do we prevail?
Or are we lost?—Hath not the ill we did
Been heretofore our good?
Is it not ill, that One, all sinless, should
Hang heavy with all curses, on a cross?
Nathless, *that cry!*—with huddled faces hid
Within the empty graves which men did scoop
To hold more damnèd dead, we shudder through
What shall exalt us or undo,—
Our triumph, or—our loss.
Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.
Zerah. Hark again!
Like a victor, speaks the Slain—
Angel voices. Finished be the trembling vain!
Ador. Upward, like a well-loved Son,
Looketh He, the orphaned One—
Angel voices. Finished is the mystic pain!
Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly forehead at the word,
Gleameth like a seraph sword.
Angel voices. Finished is the demon reign!
Ador. His breath, as living God, createth—
His breath, as dying man, completeth.
Angel voices. Finished work His hands sustain!
The Earth. In mine ancient sepulchres,
Where my kings and prophets freeze,
Adam, dead four thousand years,
Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan;
Aye his ghastly silence mocking—
Unwakened by his children's knocking
'Gainst his old sepulchral stone—
"Adam, Adam! all this curse is
Thine, and on us yet!"—

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
Wherewith they made his cerement wet—
"Adam, must thy curse remain?"—
Starts with sudden life, and hears
Through the slow dripping of the caverned eaves,—
Angel voices. Finished is his bane!
Voice from the Cross. FATHER! MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN!
Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
By wings of unclean spirits made!
They, in that last look, surveyed
The love they lost in losing heaven—
And passionately flee,
With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they* are lifting
God's strong cedar roots like leaves,
And the earthquake and the thunder,
Neither keeping neither under,
Roar and hurtle through the glooms,
And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time from the splitting tombs
Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing, with their death-calmed eyes,
The elemental strategies,
To witness, victory is the Lord's!
Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear!
Zerah. I hear alone the memory of His words.

THE EPILOGUE

I

My song is done!
My voice that long hath faltered shall be still.
The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill
Into the common light of this day's sun.

II

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain!
I hear no more the horror and the coil
Of the great world's turmoil,
Feeling Thy countenance *too still*,—nor yell
Of demons sweeping past it to their prison.

The skies, that turned to darkness with Thy pain,
Make now a summer's day,—
And on my changèd ear, that Sabbath bell
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I—ah! what am I
To counterfeit with faculty earth-darkened?
Seraphic brows of light,
And seraph language never used nor hearkened?
Ah me! what word that seraphs say, could come
From mouth so used to sighs—so soon to lie
Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace!—of grace
Because of God!—whether ye bow adown,
In your own Heaven, before the living face
Of Him who died, and deathless wears the crown—
Or whether at this hour, ye haply are
Anear, around me, hiding in the night
Of this permitted ignorance, your light,
This feebleness to spare,—
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart should dare
Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
And lay upon their burning lips a thought
Damp with the weeping which mine earth inherits;
And while ye find in such hoarse music, wrought
To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying smile!—
Ye know to pity, well.

V.

I too may haply smile another day,
At the far recollection of this lay,
When God may call me in your midst to dwell,
To hear your most sweet music's miracle,
And see your wondrous faces. May it be,
For His remembered sake, the Slain on rood,
Who rolled His earthly garment red in blood,
(Treading the wine-press) that the weak, like me,
Before His heavenly throne should walk in white.

A Vision of Poets.

"O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power.
Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?
Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on."

BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night:

And thus he rose disquieted,
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
And in the forest wandered;

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver: pavement fair,
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To footprint o'er if such were there,

But rather sit by breathlessly,
With tears in their large eyes to see
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet—who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand, without intent,
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument.

Nor jarred it with his humour, as,
With a faint stirring down the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then—as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Dropping from Heaven's encyclic rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady, riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face—
"What ho, Sir Poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night, in ghostly chace

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
Who chaunts between the nightingales,
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice;

She looked a queen, who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. "Now, nay,"
He answered;—"Slumber passed away,

Compelled by instincts in my head,
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky,
And spake: "The moon's regality
Will hear no praise! she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom---I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that mourned—
"To their worth, lady! They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

"To their worth! Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold; and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief, whose mortage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown--

"Both these are happier, more approved,
Than poets!—Why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved?"

"The south can judge not of the north;"
She resumed calmly—"I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, sooth! and to anoint them all
With blessed oils, which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers do, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young.

"As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse plucketh at their sign.

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud,
Which the fair Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well,—
And holy sweet the asphodel,

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this!

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death,—and even before;
Sweet, consecrated evermore!

"What! dost thou judge it a strange thing,
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?

"Come on with me, come on with me;
And learn in coming. Let me free
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,—
'Twas a bee's hum—a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did, far and fair,
O'erswim the masses everywhere:

Save where the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently,—
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
With burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar,·

A wild brown moorland underneath,
Low glimmering here and thither, with
White pools in breaks, as blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow:

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend, if tempest-blown,
But break off sudden like a stone,—

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

"Drink," said the lady, very still—
"Be holy and cold." He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees: there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies fair to view,

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

"Drink," said the lady, grave and slow—
"*World's use* behoveth thee to know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and rushes
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime: the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

"Drink," said the lady, sad and slow
"*World's love* behoveth thee to know
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly;—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-cast

From yew and cypress, and from trails
Of hemlock clasping the trunk-scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who direth stoop
Where those moist branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up;

He hears a silent, gliding coil—
The snakes breathe hard against the soil—
His foot slips in their slimy oil;

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Right in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:
"Must I drink *here?*" he questioned meek
The lady's will, with utterance weak.

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be"—
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
"Behoves thee know *World's cruelty.*"

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth
As if from rivers of the south.

His lip sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,—

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this:
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread:
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold;
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold.

But SHE was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up!" said she, with voice where song
Eddied through speech—"rise up! be strong;
And learn how right avengeth wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet:
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a pure light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

Broke full against the arched roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
Then, poising the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed,
In the pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend;

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The niched saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scène,
That central altar stood serene
In its clear stedfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain;
And his brow's height was sovereign—

On the vast background of his wings
Arose his image; and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more,
Or less, the angel-heart) before,
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes:
While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar,—pale and crowned,
With sovran eyes of depth profound.

Deathful their faces were; and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified:

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current—These were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare! on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the World. Oh, eyes sublime—
With tears and laughters for all time!

Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful, when he frowned
As the gods did,—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child,

Right in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which, down the trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for Gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear,
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul
And Sappho, crowned with aureole

Of ebon curls on calmed brows—
O poet woman ! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose !

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter struck
The hollow caves of Thought, and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each
And Virgil shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high ;—
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly

Lucretius—nobler than his mood
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe, and said " No God, '

Finding no bottom . he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber side,

By grace of God ! his face is stern,
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile, you had said,
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their locks in one.—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo,—who with laughters filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm. And not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover.
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille—
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

Who from his brain lit heart hath thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each perfumed with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,

With murmurs of a purple ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Between the bright curls blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon.

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick
Song after song, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing dim:
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonnaire
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they drew
From outward Nature, to renew
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows, when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue blind; and Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave,
And salt as life: forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and other more)
The lighted altar booming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar:

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, *still as stone, and yet intense;*
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by sense.

All still and calm as statue-stone:
The life lay coilèd unforegone
Up in the awful eyes alone,

And flung its length out through the air
Into whatever eyes should dare
To front them—Awful shapes and fair!

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady--and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard;—

" *World's use* is cold—*world's love* is vain,—
World's cruelty is bitter bane;
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

"Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood! Dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

"His organ's pedals strike along
These poets' hearts, which, metal strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

"From which foundation he can guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified.

"Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK (יברך)
Breathes back this music—folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack:

"And men walk in it, crying 'Lo!
'The world is wider, and we know
'The very heavens look brighter so.

"'The stars move statelier round the edge
'O' the silver spheres, and give in pledge
'Their light for nobler privilege.

"'No little flower but joys or grieves—
'Full life is rustling in the sheaves;
'Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.'

"So works this music on the earth;
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

"A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

"Now hearken!" Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint; and thrilled and throbbed betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed:

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips
And rises in apocalypse.

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at once,
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass.

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell,
Again alone grew audible.
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly—
"Tried poets, hearken and reply!

"Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the Jubilant,—

"If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance; and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

"If, as two colours must be viewed
In a seen image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

"If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly,—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

"If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world, must pale their lips,
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

"If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—
Because that bolt (in man's reverse),

"Was shot to the heart o' the wood, and lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

"From marshalled angels, must shut down
Their lids, first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

"If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own lack, from final lack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

"Those temporal sorrows, till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

"If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

"What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water? choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

"Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,—

"Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?"—
The Spirits bent
Their awful brows, and said—"Content."

Content! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying,
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad, until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white,
And arches crossed, being clear to sight.

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—"Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

"This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument hath room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

"Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come,
Consummating while they consume.

"What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift."

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And One did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint.
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow,
If *they* walked to, instead of fro.

And some with conscious ambling free
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot for harmony.

And some composing sudden sighs,
In attitudes of point device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear

As a sane eye in master passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid—the wrinkling of the brow
Exaggerate with mock and mow—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead—though he lacked
An inch of any. And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,—
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate,
Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate.

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard shut lips. And one, that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
For great world-laughter, as it might
For great world-wrath, with equal right!

Out came a speaker from that crowd,
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—"Thus,
O angel, who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

"Fit service from sufficient soul—
Hand-service, to receive world's dole
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing through
And not too grave to spoil the show.

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up! fie!—That rage
Barbaric antedates the age.
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to . . . summer eve.

"And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,—
Poising, between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finished:

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn—

Ay, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had passed.

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying—"If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

"For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay short comings evermore.

"Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered! for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud. So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

"I ask no wages—seek no fame.
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

"I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use.

"I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain,—

"Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound,—

"Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir note fine,

Till the broad gloriole, round his brow,
Did vibrate with the light below,
But what he said I do not know

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, glossing down
Their eyes capacious of renown

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command,

Straight through the haze—And so, as erst
A strain, more noble than the first,
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes, now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind,
Which won together sense and mind

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,
Exultant, in a mounting throng –
Now dying off into a song

Fed upon minors,—starry sounds
Moved on free-paced, in silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows,
Symphonious with the next that rose·

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,–

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought and as a roll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon, in her own light cast back

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted--slow,

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory

Then he looked round: he was alone
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that seared the ground --

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips—
World's cruelty attaints his lips;

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill!

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood,
And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—"O God, my God!"

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,—
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,
He prayed along the solitude,—
"Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!

"And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,—
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad."

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart—
We press too close on church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way; and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing, as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark! a distant sound that grows!
A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those!

A breezy noise, which is not breeze!
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees;

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,—
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
"Hush! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
"What are your palms for?"—"To be spread,"
He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month; and now
The world, which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms—They must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed, and said, "Did he foresee
Any such honour?" "Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

"A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked;

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering, on his iris broad,
The images of things bestowed

"By the chief Poet,—'God!' he cried,
'Be praised for anguish, which has tried;
For Beauty, which has satisfied:—

"'For this world's presence, half within
And half without me—sound and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

"'I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world! Both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb!

"'I am content to be so weak,—
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

"'I am content to be so bare
Before the archers; everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

"'I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

"'I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image!—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

"'I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"'Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

"'Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive!
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"'In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"'*I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth;
And Life is perfected by Death.'"

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear,
Charged with high meanings, did appear,—

And fair to see, his form and face,—
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew:
An orient beam, which pierced it through,
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness, up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go,
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered;—"Nay,
Not *so*," the childish voice did say—
"That poet turned him, first, to pray

"In silence; and God heard the rest,
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—'Come,'
He said, 'come nearer! Let the bloom

"'Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

"'Come, kiss me!' So the one in truth
Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth.

"And, in that kiss of Love, was won
Life's manumission. All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by his,
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled—his lips shook,
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates, though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved,
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"*I*," softly said the child; and then,
"*I*," said he louder, once again.
"*His son*,—my rank is, among men.

"And now that men exalt his name,
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

"He did not die alone; nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb,
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,—
Saying, *Come nearer!*—and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumed he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
"That poet now hath entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs, in troops,
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner Hopes."

"But *thou*," I murmured,—to engage
The child's speech farther—"hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage."

'Glory to God—to God!" he saith
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."

The Poet's Vow.

——O be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.
WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

I.

EVE is a twofold mystery—
The stillness Earth doth keep;
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap,
As if all souls, which Earth controls,
Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

II.

The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea;
The landsmen watch the rocking boats,
In a pleasant company;
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three.

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
Her cottage door and smiled;
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child,
Which hath no speech, but its hands can reach
And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the coffined place of stone;
When the bat hath shrunk from the praying monk—
And the praying monk is gone.

V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll:
His carven lips refused in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
And his stedfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul.

VI.

You would not think that brow could e'er
Ungentle moods express:
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness:
When the very star, that shines from far,
Shines trembling, ne'ertheless.

VII.

It lacked—all need—the softening light
Which other brows supply:
We should conjoin the scathèd trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray, entwining, may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII.

ne gazed within the poet's face—
The poet gazed in none:
threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
ronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures,
Vith wrong to nature done.

IX.

Because this poet daringly,
  The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
  He could not change by art,
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
  To a stagnant place apart.

X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
  Or grief's fantastic whim;
But, weights and shows of sensual things
  Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid, the pressure slid,
  And made its vision dim.

XI.

And darkening in the dark, he strove
  'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
To lose in shade and wave and cloud,
  His brother's haunting cry.
The winds were welcome as they swept:
God's five-day work he would accept,
  But let the rest go by.

XII.

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
  That weepest in thy glee!
Whom God created very good,
  And very mournful, we!
Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,
  As Abel's rose from thee.

XIII.

"Poor crystal sky, with stars astray;
  Mad winds, that howling go
From east to west; perplexed seas,
  That stagger from their blow!
O motion wild! O wave defiled!
  Our curse hath made thee so.

XIV.

"*We!* and *our* curse! Do *I* partake
The dreary, cruel sin?
Have *I* the apple at my lips?
The money-lust within?
Do *I* human stand with the wronging hand,
To the blasting heart akin?

XV.

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn pomp designed!
Behold, submissive to your cause,
An holy wrath I find,
And, for your sake, the bondage break.
That knits me to my kind.

XVI.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no—
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow;
His changing love—with stars above!
His pride—with graves below!

XVII.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the lighted hearth,
His greetings by the way;
His musing looks, his systemed books,
All man, for aye and aye.

XVIII.

"That so my purged, once human heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me, all blessingly,
The woe mine Adam sent.

XIX

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerous, constant, deep,
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,
As slumbering men have mystic sense
Of watchers on their sleep.

XX

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done,'
Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one."

PART THE SECOND

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED

I

The poet's vow was inly sworn—
The poet's vow was told.
He parted to his crowding friends
The silver and the gold;
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand,
In a somewhat slacker hold.

II

They wended forth, the crowding friends
With farewells smooth and kind—
They wended forth, the solaced friends,
And left but twain behind.
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

III.

He said— "My friends have wended forth,
  With farewells smooth and kind
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
  Ye need not stay behind
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,—
And let my lands ancestral make
  A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

"And when beside your wassail board
  Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you, that the giver be
  In all his gifts forgot!
Or alone of all his words recall
  The last,—Lament me not"

V

She looked upon him silently,
  With her large, doubting eyes,
Like a child that never knew but love,
  Whom words of wrath surprise,
Till the rose did break from either cheek
  And the sudden tears did rise

VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,
  While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears,
  Till, all his purpose known,
She turnèd slow, as she would go—
  The tears were shaken down—

VII

She turnèd slow, as she would go,
  Then quickly turned again,
And gazing in his face to seek
  Some little touch of pain—
"I thought," she said,—but shook her head,—
  She tried that speech in vain.

VIII.

"I thought—but I am half a child,
  And very sage art thou—
The teachings of the heaven and earth
  Did keep us soft and low.
They have drawn *my* tears, in early years
  Or ere I wept—as now

IX.

"But now that in thy face I read
  Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
  Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If *I* indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven,
  As *thou* canst look on *me*.

X.

"And couldest thou as calmly view
  Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
  Along the dewy sod?
And thy mother's look from holy book
  Rose, like a thought of God?

XI.

"O brother,—called so, ere her last
  Explaining words were said!
O fellow-watcher in her room,
  With hushèd voice and tread!
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
  And knew that she was dead?

XII.

"I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
  That dower I will not hold!
I tread below my feet that go,
  These parchments bought and sold.
The tears I weep are mine to keep,
  And worthier than thy gold."

XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood
 Alone, each turned to each;
Till Roland brake the silence left
 By that soft-throbbing speech—
"Poor heart!" he cried, "it vainly tried
 The distant heart to reach!

XIV.

"And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high,
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
 That cause to dream and die—
What blessing can, from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh?

XV.

"Ay! what, from earth—create for man,
 And moaning in his moan?
Ay! what from stars—revealed to man,
 And man-named, one by one?
Ay, more! what blessing can be given,
Where the Spirits seven, do show in Heaven,
 A Man upon the throne?—

XVI.

"A man on earth He wandered once,
 All meek and undefiled:
And those who loved Him, said 'He wept'—
 None ever said He smiled;
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
When He bowed His blessed face, I ween,
 To bless that happy child.

XVII.

"And now He pleadeth up in Heaven
 For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
 In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear His Godhead's glare,
 Than the pathos of His eyes.

XVIII.

"I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use,
Since earth on axle ran!
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine—the blood-drop's stain
He left there, MAN for man.

XIX.

"So, for the blood's sake, shed by Him,
Whom angels, God, declare,
Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
To see i' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share."

XX.

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
As dimly as thy breath!
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death;
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

XXI.

"And in betwixt the sound and me,
White creatures like a mist
Did float me round confusedly,—
Mysterious shapes unwist!
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow
To still the pulse they kist.

XXII.

"The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done;
Go, *man*; to love! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone.

The bats along the ceilings cling,—
The lizards in the floors do run,—
And storms and years have worn and reft
The stair by human builders left,
In working at the stone!"

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

I.

He dwelt alone, and, sun and moon,
Perpetual witness made
Of his repented humanness;
Until they seemed to fade.
His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying,
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing.
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing.

III.

An awful thing that feared itself
While many years did roll,—
A lonely man, a feeble man,—
A part beneath the whole—
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

IV.

The poet at his lattice sate,
And downwardly looked he:
Three Christians wended by to prayers,
With mute ones in their ee.

Each turned above a face of love,
  And called him to the far chapèlle
With voice more tuneful than its bell—
  But still they wended there.

V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
  A bridegroom and his dame:
She speaketh low for happiness,
  She blusheth red for shame,—
But never a tone of benison
  From out the lattice came.

VI.

A little child with inward song,
  No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
  The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish smile
  Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE KEEPING OF THE VOW.

I.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
  As white and still as they;
And the old nurse that watched her bed,
  Rose up with "Well-a-day!"
And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and bough
Sans wind and bird—none knoweth how—
  To cheer her as she lay.

II.

The old nurse started when she saw
  Her sudden look of woe!
But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth
  In a meek smile did go;
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
  Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III.

"Till then, shut out those sights and sounds,
  And pray God pardon me,
That I without this pain, no more,
  His blessed works can see!
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
  What thy last love should be."

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,
  As white she lay beneath;
The old eyes searching, dim with life,
  The young ones dim with death,
To read their look, if sound forsook
  The trying, trembling breath.—

V.

"When all this feeble breath is done,
  And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed, for never a feast,
  My body in shroud arrayed;
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
  As if that still I prayed.

VI.

"And heap beneath mine head the flowers
  You stoop so low to pull;
The little white flowers from the wood,
  Which grow there in the cool;
Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their names,
  And filled thine apron full.

VII.

"Weep not! *I* weep not. Death is strong;
  The eyes of Death are dry;
But lay this scroll upon my breast
  When hushed its heavings lie;
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
  Which shineth presently.

VIII.

"And when it shineth, straightway call
  Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
  All barefaced on the bier—
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
  That waveth long anear.

IX.

"And up the bank where I used to sit
  And dream what life would be,
Along the brook, with its sunny look
  Akin to living glee;
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,
  Let them gently carry me.

X

"And through the piney forest still,
  And down the open moorland—
Round where the sea beats mistily
  And blindly on the foreland—
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
  To the old hall of Courland

XI.

"And when withal they near the hall,
  In silence let them lay
My bier before the bolted door,
  And leave it for a day:
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
  And not be turned away."

XII.

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
  Whose mutual look was gone:
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
  Whose answering voice was done;
And naught she heard, till a little bird
  Upon the casement's woodbine swinging,
Broke out into a loud sweet singing
  For joy o' the summer sun.
"Alack! alack!"—she watched no more—
  With head on knee she wailèd sore;
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
  For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

I.

The poet oped his bolted door,
  The midnight sky to view;
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
  Whenever his breath he drew;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
  Their falling with the dew.

II.

They shine upon the stedfast hills,
  Upon the swinging tide;
Upon the narrow track of beach,
  And the murmuring pebbles pied;
They shine on every lovely place—
They shine upon the corpse's face,
  As *it* were fair beside.

III.

It lay before him, humanlike,
  Yet so unlike a thing!
More awful in its shrouded pomp
  Than any crownèd king,
All calm and cold, as it did hold
  Some secret, glorying

IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay
  Clung to his heart and knee
As if those folded palms could strike,
  He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
  Whose speech the scroll must be

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL

"I LEFT thee last, a child at heart.
  A woman scarce in years
I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
  Which neither feels nor fears
I have no breath to use in sighs,
They laid the death weights on mine eyes,
  To seal them safe from tears

"Look on me with thine own calm look –
  I meet it calm as thou!
No look of thine can change *this* smile,
  Or break thy sinful vow.
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth . . thine earth,—a part–
  It cannot love thee now

"But out, alas! these words are writ
  By a living, loving one,
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,
  The warm, quick tears do run.

Ah, let the unloving corpse controul
Thy scorn back from the loving soul,
Whose place of rest is won.

"I have prayed for thee with deep sobs,
When passion's course was free:
I have prayed for thee with mute lips,
In the anguish none could see!
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft'—
But I only prayed for thee.

"Go to! I pray for thee no more—
The corpse's tongue is still:
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill:
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath licence from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry,
Which God shall hear and bless!
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,
And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless."

V.

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind!
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind.
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro,
With the living wail of his mind.

VI.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie;
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

VII.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart!

VIII

O broken heart! O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature!
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith—i' the presence high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

IX

Yes, and a human one too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
To his dying heart and brain!)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

X

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both, one dwelling deep
And, after years had mossed the stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.
And, when the happy boy would rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the tree—
"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,
"Upon this human dust asleep
And hold it in thy constant ken,

That God's own unity compresses
  One into one, the human many,
And that His everlastingness is
  The bond which is not loosed by any.
  For thou thyself this law must keep,
If not in love, in sorrow then,
Though smiling not like other men,
  Yet, like them, thou must weep."



The Romaunt of Margret.

Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove? —

QUARLES

I

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
 The yew tree leaf will suit.
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
 Turn round and pluck the fruit!
Now reach my harp from off the wall,
 Where shines the sun aslant
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
 Unto my wild romaunt,
 Margret, Margret

II

Sitteth the fair ladye
 Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry tone,
 Her merry thoughts to guide
It runneth through the trees,
 It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
 A way more pleasant still
 Margret, Margret

III

The night is in her hair,
 And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her forehead white
 Like a spirit's hand is laid;

Her lips part with a smile,
Instead of speakings done—
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.
Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings:
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things.
That dream, by that ladye,
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look.
Margret, Margret.

V.

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river:
It lieth no less in its quietness,
For that which resteth never;
Most like a trusting heart
Upon a passing faith,—
Or as, upon the course of life,
The stedfast doom of death.
Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,
The lady doth not dream,—
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
In rest upon the stream!
It shaketh without wind,
It parteth from the tide;
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,—
It sitteth at her side.
Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,
And keep thee from thy swound!
With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
And hear its voice's sound!
For so will sound thy voice,
When thy face is to the wall;
And such will be thy face, ladye,
When the maidens work thy pall—
Margret, Margret.

VIII.

"Am I not like to thee?"—
The voice was calm and low—
And between each word you might have heard
The silent forests grow.
"*The like may sway the like!*
By which mysterious law,
Mine eyes from thine, and my lips from thine,
The light and breath may draw,
Margret, Margret.

IX.

"My lips do need thy breath,
My lips do need thy smile,
And my pale deep eyne, that light in thine,
Which met the stars erewhile
Yet go with light and life,
If that thou lovest one
In all the earth, who loveth thee
As truly as the sun,
Margret, Margret."

X

Her cheek had waxèd white,
Like cloud at fall of snow;
Then like to one at set of sun,
It waxèd red alsò;

For love's name maketh bold,
As if the loved were near!
And then she sighed the deep long sigh
Which cometh after fear
Margret, Margret.

XI

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
Shall never fear thee now!'
(And a noble sight was the sudden light
Which lit her lifted brow)
"Can earth be dry of streams,
Or hearts, of love?" she said—
"Who doubteth love, can know not love:
He is already dead"
Margret, Margret.

XII.

"I have" and here her lips
Some word in pause did keep,
And gave the while a quiet smile,
As if they paused in sleep,—
"I have . a brother dear,
A knight of knightly fame!
I broidered him a knightly scarf
With letters of my name .
Margret, Margret.

XIII.

"I fed his grey goss-hawk,
I kissed his fierce bloodhound;
I sate at home when he might come,
And caught his horn's far sound:
I sang him hunter's songs,
I poured him the red wine—
He looked across the cup, and said,
"*I love thee, sister mine.*"
Margret, Margret.

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughter:
The sounding river which rolled for ever,
Stood dumb and stagnant after.
"Brave knight thy brother is;
But better loveth he
Thy chaliced wine than thy chanted song—
And better both, than thee,
Margret, Margret."

XV.

The lady did not heed
The river's silence, while
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
And calm was still her smile.
"My little sister wears
The look our mother wore:
I smooth her locks with a golden comb—
I bless her evermore."
Margret, Margret.

XVI.

"I gave her my first bird,
When first my voice it knew;
I made her share my posies rare,
And told her where they grew:
I taught her God's dear name
With prayer and praise, to tell—
She looked from heaven into my face,
And said, "*I love thee well.*"
Margret, Margret.

XVII.

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughter:
You could see each bird as it woke and stared
Through the shrivelled foliage, after.

"Fair child thy sister is;
But better loveth she
Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers—
And better both, than thee,
Margret, Margret."

XVIII.

The lady did not heed
The withering on the bough:
Still calm her smile, albeit the while
A little pale her brow.
"I have a father old,
The lord of ancient halls:
An hundred friends are in his court,
Yet only me he calls
Margret, Margret.

XIX.

"An hundred knights are in his court,
Yet read I by his knee,
And when forth they go to the tourney show,
I rise not up to see.
'Tis a weary book to read—
My tryst's at set of sun!
But loving and dear beneath the stars
Is his blessing when I've done"
Margret, Margret.

XX.

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughter:
And moon and star, though bright and far
Did shrink and darken after.
"High lord thy father is;
But better loveth he
His ancient halls than his hundred friends,—
His ancient halls, than thee,
Margret, Margret."

XXI.

The lady did not heed
    That the far stars did fail:
Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .
    Nay, but she is not pale!
"I have a more than friend
    Across the mountains dim:
No other's voice is soft to me,
    Unless it nameth *him*."
                Margret, Margret.

XXII.

"Though louder beats mine heart,
    I know his tread again—
And his far plume aye, unless turned away,
    For the tears do blind me then.
We brake no gold, a sign
    Of stronger faith to be;
But I wear his last look in my soul,
    Which said, *I love but thee!*"
                Margret, Margret.

XXIII.

IT trembled on the grass,
    With a low, shadowy laughter:
And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
    Were sped by church-bell, after:
And shadows, 'stead of light,
    Fell from the stars above,
In flakes of darkness on her face
    Still bright with trusting love.
                Margret, Margret.

XXIV.

"He *loved* but only thee!
    That love is transient too.
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
    I' the mouth that vowed thee true.

Will he open his dull eyes,
When tears fall on his brow?
Behold, the death worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
Margret, Margret.'

XXV

Her face was on the ground—
None saw the agony!
But the men at sea did that night agree
They heard a drowning cry
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead,
And a white corse lain beside
Margret, Margret

XXVI

A knight's bloodhound and he
The funeral watch did keep
With a thought o' the chase, he stroked its face,
As it howled to see him weep
A fair child kissed the dead,
But shrank before the cold
And alone, yet proudly, in his hall,
Did stand a baron old
Margret, Margret

XXVII

Hang up my harp again—
I have no voice for song
Not song but wail, and mourners pale
Not bards, to love belong
O failing human love!
O light by darkness known!
O false, the while thou treadest earth!
O deaf, beneath the stone!
Margret, Margret,

Isobel's Child.

—— so find we profit
By losing of our prayers.
SHAKESPEARE.

I

To rest the weary nurse has gone ;
  An eight day watch had watchèd she,
Rocking beneath the sun and moon
  The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said,
"The fever waneth—wend to bed—
  For now the watch comes round to me."

II

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
  Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed :
  And as the gusty wind did blow
  The night lamp's flare across her face,
She saw or seemed, the while she dreamed,
  That the tall poplars on the hill,
  The seven tall poplars on the hill,
  Did clasp the setting sun until
  His rays dropped from him, pined and still
    As blossoms in frost ;
And he waned and he paled, so weirdly crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.
  The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see,
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be
  Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

She only dreamed. for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby, and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Heavy with love's unmeted weight,
And red as a rose of Harpocrate,
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

IV

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild,
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one—
As momently time's segments fall
On the ear of God who hears through all,
Eternity's unbroken monotone
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then crieth aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self driven,
And riseth upward to its tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed;
Dilating with a tempest-soul
Of gathered sound, the trees that break
Through their own outline with dark hands, and roll
A shadow, massive as a cloud in heaven,
Across the castle lake
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well--
She knew not that she smiled,
She knew not that the storm was wild.
Through the uproar drear she could not hear
The castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

V.

O sight for wondering look!
While the external nature broke
Into such abandonment;
While the very mist, heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy
Against nature, with a din—
A sense of silence and of steady
Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in
The human creature's room.

VI.

So motionless she sate,
The babe asleep upon her knees,
You might have dreamed their souls had gone
Away to things inanimate,
In such to live, in such to moan;
And that their bodies had ta'en back,
In mystic change, all silences
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
In waters safe from their own sound.
Only she wore
The deepening smile I named before,
And *that* a deepening love expressed—
And who at once can love and rest?

VII.

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
Watch upon the baby sleeping,
Floated with its tender light
Downward, from the drooping eyes,
Upward, from the lips apart,
Over cheeks which had grown white
With an eight-day weeping.
All smiles come in such a wise,
Where tears shall fall, or have of old—
Like northern lights that fill the heart
Of heaven in sign of cold.

VIII.

Motionless she sate:
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile, and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon
Up a dark cathedral aisle:
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

IX.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps—
Wearing in its spirit deeps
The unrevealèd mystery
Of its Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they revealèd be,
Will not let it slumber so
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun!
Knowing all things by their blooms,
Not their roots; yea,—sun and sky,
Only by the warmth that comes
Out of each,—earth, only by
The pleasant hues that o'er it run;
And human love, by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging round
The little mouth so slumber-bound.
All which broken sentiency
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality
Good or evil, each sublime,
Through life and death to life again!

O little lids, now folded fast,
Must ye learn to drop at last
Our large and burning tears?
O warm quick body, must thou lie
When the time comes round to die,
Still from all the whirl of years,
Bare of all the joy and pain?
O small frail being, wilt thou stand
At God's right hand,—
Lifting up those sleeping eyes,
Dilated by sublimest destinies,
In endless waking? Thrones and seraphim,
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise—
Thy look alone on *Him*?
Or else, self willed to tread the Godless place,
(God keep thy will!) feel thine own energies,
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
The sleepless, deathless life within thee, grasp,
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere,
And overcome thee with thine own despair?

X

More soft, less solemn images
Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
Silently as snow
She had seen eight days depart
Hour by hour, on bended knees,
With pale wrung hands and prayings low
And broken—through which came the sound
Of tears that fell against the ground,
Making sad stops —"Dear Lord, dear Lord!"
She still had prayed—(the heavenly word,
Broken by an earthly sigh)
"Thou, who didst not erst deny
The mother joy to Mary mild,
Blessed in the Blessed Child,
Which hearkened in meek babyhood
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
To all that music interfused

In breasts of angels high and good!
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven,
The pretty baby Thou hast given,
Or ere that I have seen him play
Around his father's knees, and known
That *he* knew how my love hath gone
  From all the world to him.
Think, God among the cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
Still cheeks! and feel at every tread
His little body which is dead
And hidden in the turfy fold,
Doth make the whole warm earth a cold!
O God, I am so young, so young—
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
With shaken lips and hands out-wrung:
Thou knowest all my prayings were,
'I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
Thank God!' I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death. The earth doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover:
And must the first who teacheth me
The form of shrouds and funerals, be
Mine own first-born beloved? he
Who taught me first this mother-love?'
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,
Thou madest tender! Thou who art
So happy in Thy heaven alway,
Take not mine only bliss away!"

XI.

She so had prayed: and God, who hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
From that beloved babe had ta'en
The fever and the beating pain.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled;
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart, the smile, enwrought,
(Soon strong enough her lips to reach,)
Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
To float along a happy dream,
Beyond it, into speech —

XII

"I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God hath heard my prayer!
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together will kneel down
Upon His earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us twain,
And give Him thankful praise"

XIII

Dully and wildly drives the rain
Against the lattices drives the rain

XIV

"I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me!"

XV

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

XVI

"But now, O baby mine, together
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather,
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother!—
Two human loves make one divine."

XVII

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,
As beat on the lattices wind and rain

XVIII

"My little child, what wilt thou choose?
Let me look at thee and ponder
What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the trees,
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
Thy spirit with the river, seen
Intermittently between
The winding beechen alleys?
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which no bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian valleys
Upon the dewy grass?"

XIX

The large white owl that with age is blind,
That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind!
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past—
He is borne by the winds; the rains do follow;

His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still in the lightning, coldly glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

XX.

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise?
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay? beneath thy treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden;
And stars, drawn downward by thy looks
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

XXI.

The tame hawk in the castle yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet!
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound!

XXII.

"But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek!
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between.
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,—
Thy looks are very meek!
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,

As these on thine—and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor mar
The tender silence of thy joys;
Or when the silentnesses are
Too tender for themselves, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above,
And utter their one meaning, LOVE,—
That *He* may hear His name!"

XXIII.

No wind—no rain—no thunder.
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent,
Nor the wind near finishing.
Who would have said that the storm was diminishing?
No wind—no rain—no thunder!
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless,
As ripe fruits on the ground, unshaken wholly—
As life in death;
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel,
As the tempest could not!
Against the door went panting the breath
Of the hound whose cry was still—
And *she*, constrained, howe'er she would not,
Did lift her eyes, and see the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God made visible,
That men might bless it at their will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold.
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place:

Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,
Have power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

XXV

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth!
The mother's looks do shrink away,
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmèd by what paineth.
Is any glamour in the case?
Is it dream or is it sight?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child?
It is not dream, but sight!—

XXVI

The babe hath awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother,
Bent over it, lifted another!
Not the baby looks that go
Unmeaningly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, through work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears!
A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'erglazed by manhood's tears
The tears of the man full grown,
With the power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child!

To see that babe brow, wrought
By witnessings of thought,
To judgment's prodigy,
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving,
  Except the speechless cry)
  Quickened to mind's expression
  Shaped to articulation—
Yea, speaking words—yea, naming woe
In tones that with it strangely went,
Because so baby innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother so!—

XXVII

"O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
  Christ's name hath made it strong!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
  The happy heavenly air!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
  Upon the face of God *

XXVIII.

"Mother, mother! can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam—
I heard a sound more sweet than these
  When rippled by the wind
Did you see the Dove, with wings
Bathed in golden glisterings
From a sunless light behind,

* "For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10).

Dropping on me from the sky,
Soft as mother's kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
Saw you how His love-large eye
Looked upon me mystic calms,
Till the power of His divine
Vision was indrawn to mine?

XXIX.

"Oh, the dream within the dream!
I saw celestial places even
Oh, the vistas of high palms,
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite—
Lifting up their green still tops
To the heaven of Heaven!
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river
Glorified in its for ever
Flowing from the Throne!
Oh, the shining holinesses
Of the thousand thousand faces
God-sunned by the thronèd ONE!
And made intense with such a love,
That though I saw them turned above,
Each, loving, seemed for also me!
And oh, the Unspeakable! the HE,—
The manifest in secrecies,
Yet of mine own heart partaker!
With the overcoming look
Of one who hath been once forsook,
And blesseth the forsaker.
Mother, mother, let me go
Toward the face that looketh so,—
Through the mystic, wingèd Four
Whose are inward, outward eyes
Dark with light of mysteries,—
And the restless evermore
'Holy, holy, holy;'—through
The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view

Of cherubim and seraphim;—
Through the four-and-twenty crowned
Stately elders, white around,—
Suffer me to go to Him!

XXX.

"Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth?
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearned breath?
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night, illumine death?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling; having bent
In angelic wilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling, thence, one only thought
To fill his whole eternity.
He the teacher is for me!—
He can teach what I would know—
Mother, mother, let me go!—

XXXI.

"Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo?
And light a starry fire, while heeding
His hearth's is burning too?
Drown in music the earth's din?—
And keep his own wild soul within
The law of his own harmony?—
Mother! albeit this be so,
Let me to my Heavèn go!
A little harp me waits thereby—
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And tuned to music spherical,

Hanging on the green life-tree,
Where no willows ever be,
Shall I miss that harp of mine?
Mother, no!—the Eye divine
Turned upon it, makes it shine—
And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to an immortal fytte,
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

XXXII

"And love! earth's love! and *can* we love
Fixedly where all things move?
Can the sinning love each other?
    Mother, mother,
I tremble in thy close embrace—
I feel thy tears adown my face—
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
    O dreary earthly love!
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
To the place which loving is,
Yet not sad! and when is given
Escape to *thee* from this below,
Thou shalt behold me that I wait
For thee beside the happy gate,
And silence shall be up in Heaven,
  To hear our meeting kiss."

XXXIII

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
And starts to see, beside her bed,
The lady, with a grandeur spread,
Like pathos, o'er her face, as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone:—
  The babe upon her arm was dead!
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

XXXIV.

"Wake, nurse!"—the lady said:
"*We* are waking—he and I—
I, on earth, and he, in sky!
And thou must help me to o'erlay,
With garment white, this little clay,
Which needs no more our lullaby.

XXXV.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
That God would do His will! and thus
He did it, nurse: He parted *us*
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face:—and *I* am calm:
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

XXXVI.

"This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence."

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love, meanwhile,
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so Named, who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil;
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
  And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine,
  Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer, and told for beads
  The dews of the eventide.

II.

"O young page," said the knight,
  "A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
  The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
  Didst ward me a mortal blow—"

III.

"O brave knight," said the page,
  "Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
  Of the bloody battle game;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
  I cannot speak the same.

IV.

"Our troop is far behind,
  The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
  Tread deep the shadows through;

And in my mind some blessing kind
   Is dropping with the dew.

V

"The woodland calm is pure—
   I cannot choose but have
A thought, from these, o' the beechen-trees
   Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine,
Which sang there, while in Palestine
   The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI

"Methinks, a moment gone,
   I heard my mother pray!
I heard, Sir Knight, the prayer for *me*
   Wherein she passed away;
And I know the Heavens are leaning down
   To hear what I shall say."

VII

The page spake calm and high,
   As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
   Full heart, his own was free:
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
   Then answered smilingly—

VIII

"Sir Page, I pray your grace!
   Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, Sir Page,
   With the crook of the battle bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
   If the grasses die or grow.

IX.

"And this I meant to say,—
  My lady's face shall shine,
As ladies' faces use, to greet
  My page from Palestine,
Or speak she fair, or prank she gay,
  She is no lady of mine

X

"And this I meant to fear,—
  Her bower may suit thee ill!
For sooth, in that same field and tent,
  Thy *talk* was somewhat still
And fitter thine hand for my knightly spear,
  Than thy tongue for my lady's will"

XI

Slowly and thankfully
  The young page bowed his head
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
  Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,
  Could blush more sudden red—
"Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me
  Is suited well," he said

XII

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,—
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess dead before it,—
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,

Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death!
Beati, beati, mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around—
Now it sweeps aback, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past!
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

XIII.

"A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servèd thee!
Though thou art a knight, and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved, or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye."

XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight;—
"As a son thou hast servèd me
And would to none I had granted boon,
Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aright,—
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye

XV

"Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon,
That heavy price, from heart and life,
I paid in silence down;
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame: I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

XVI

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend,
And while I rode the lists at court,
And little guessed the end,—
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend

XVII.

"Oh, calm, below the marble grey,
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek, above the marble grey,
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
For, looking up the minster nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone

XVIII

"But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it!
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse,
Was yielded the true spirit

XIX

"I would mine hand had fought that fight,
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound,
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murthered friend, and marriage-ring,
Forced on my life together.

XX.

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
'And bring the avengèd's son anear'
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of ble, with waiting for me,
Is the corse in the next chambère'

XXI

"I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely, when thou wert not here
His own and eke my life
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife'

XXII

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow, I am under now,
To free the pilgrim's shrine
But fetch the ring, and fetch the priest,
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide, from my castle on Nyde,
While I am in Palestine.'

XXIII

"In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we
Her mother smiled upon her bed,
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee,
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV.

"My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
  That the tears run down thy face?"—
"Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
  Was in thy lady's case!
But *she* laid down the silks she wore,
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
  To the very battle place."

XXV.

And wept the page, and laughed the knight,—
  A careless laugh laughed he:
"Well done it were for thy sistèr,
  But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
  Unwomaned if she be."

XXVI.

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold
  "Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
  The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well—I dare to hold—
  By truth, or by despair."

XXVII.

He smiled no more—he wept no more,—
  But passionate he spake,—
"Oh, womanly, she prayed in tent,
  When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly, she paled in fight,
  For one belovèd's sake!—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood,
  Most woman-pure, did make!"

XXVIII.

"Well done it were for thy sister—
Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale—
Not dread for me, but love for me,
Shall make my lady pale.
No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil."

XXIX.

"But what if she mistook thy mind,
And followed thee to strife;
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love
As Paynims ask for life?"
"I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

XXX.

Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's glory lies."
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes:

XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still!
And the page seeth all, and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
"Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide!"
"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so;
And keep thou at my side."

XXXIII.

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede!
For I must loose on saddle bow
My battle casque, that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

XXXIV.

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side."
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

XXXV.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won;
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone:
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon;
For dread was the woe in the face so young,
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung,
And stood—alone, alone.

XXXVI.

He clenched his hands, as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
"Have I renounced my womanhood
For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine,
That ever I shall see?

XXXVII.

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman proud, and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind."

XXXVIII.

SHE looketh up in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her Loved did speak
How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,—
And the tears, down either cheek.

XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman!
She stands amid them all unmoved
The heart, once broken by the Loved,
Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL.

"Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups, resting?"
"I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting:

And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
  Ye would not stay to question.

XLI.

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
  That we may slay or bind him?"—
"Now search the lea, and search the wood,
  And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
  Before him than behind him."

XLII.

"Give smoother answers, lying page,
  Or perish in the lying."—
"I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
  'Twere better at replying."
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through
  The Loving is the Dying.

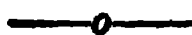
XLIII.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
  And met it from beneath,
With smile more bright in victory
  Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
  The darks of life and death.

XLIV.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly!
As over wood and over lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,

And the weary nuns, with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?



THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

"ONORA, Onora!"—her mother is calling—
She sits at the lattice, and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom—and calls home the maiden—
"Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end, where the green arbour is—
"Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks up the forest, whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles, when the anthem is done,
And the choristers, sitting with faces aslant,
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
"Onora, Onora!"

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
"Onora, art coming?"—What is it she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
"My daughter!"—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
"Now where is Onora?"—He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
"At the tryst with her lover."

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
"As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one,
And will ne'er wed another?"

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight, yet sad,
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—"The saints know I lied,
Because truth that is wicked, is fittest to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin!

"The old convent ruin, the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and grey,
As in stormy sea-coasts, appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground!
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same, with his fangs at her throat,
In the pass of the Brocken.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary,
And a face turned from heaven?

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams; and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora!
The Tempted is sinning.'"

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming!
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes.
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
And floats through the chamber.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
"I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me.
And I know by the hills, that the battle is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee."

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
But the boy started up, pale with tears, passion wrought,—
"O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?"

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,
"By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St Agnes in sleeping

Half ashamed and half softened, the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek
She bowed down to kiss him Dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY
That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART

A bed—ONORA *sleeping* ANGELS, *but not near*.

First Angel

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?

Second Angel

As bodies be

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits, when
They meeken, not to God but men

First Angel

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That, at her waking, she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this! not only her.—
Let me approach, to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.
Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.
Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.
Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.
One word: Is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!
THE PLACE IS FILLED. [ANGELS *vanish.*

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.
Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.
Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.
It is a *thought.*

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it wou'd.
I say in it no holy hymn—I do no holy work;
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.
Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least.
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast—

I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with *him*, oh never more but so.
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard stone,—
Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight! they move at nights alone
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,—
"Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!"

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign

Onora in sleep

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my word shall answer thine.
I hear a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying;
I see the poppies in the corn, I used to sport away in—
What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?
Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen?

Evil Spirit

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand,
Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father, hand in hand,
And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause and kind,
Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I hear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for mournful cause:
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed applause:
The spirits trailed, along the pines, low laughter like a breeze,
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back afraid.
Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die:—
I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company!
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine, upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee, might, so, have shadowed twain—
For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.
Love feareth death. I was no child—I was betrothed that day,
I wore a troth kiss on my lips, I could not give away
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own Betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own,—
Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were cold in grave?
How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her*! that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I would hear the new oath he might take—
That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah me! while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!) would darken down to *him*

Evil Spirit

Who told thee thou wert called to death?

Onora in sleep

I sate all night beside thee—
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing, all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak.
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn,
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly fragments torn
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,
We heard, beside the Heavenly Gate, the angels murmuring —
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to seven
"And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of Heaven:
"And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
"For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*"—

Evil Spirit

Speak out to me—speak bold and free

Onora in sleep

And then I heard thee say,—
"I count, upon my rosary brown, the hours thou hast to stay!
"Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
"Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of *thee*—
"And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
"Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall guess what angels be—

"Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . Alas!—my father's
hand's acold—
The meadows seem
Evil Spirit
Forbear the dream, or ! . the vow be told!
Onora in sleep
I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—
This rosary brown, which is thine own,—lost soul of buried nun—
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone,—
I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary, (Dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe
Evil Spirit
And canst thou prove
Onora in sleep
O love—my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel?—is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name and the angels heard but *his.*
Evil Spirit.
Well done, well done!
Onora in sleep
Ay me! the sun the dreamlight 'gins to pine,
Ay me! how dread can look the Dead!—Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the night,
There is nought The great willow, her lattice before,
Large drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor,
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free
From the death clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY

THIRD PART

'Tis a morn for a bridal, the merry bride bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the chapelle;
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—
Till the chapel cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,
“And so endeth a wooing!”

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say;
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door,—
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child!
He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

“O fair-featured maids, ye are many!” he cried,—
“But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,
As ye see them before ye?”

Out spake the bride's mother—“The vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!”
Out spake the bride's lover—“The vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd.”

“Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud—
Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!”—
—“O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*,
O my father belovèd!”

Then out laughed the bridegroom, and out laughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall—
"So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother," quoth he,
"She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady."

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train:
Though he spake to the bride, she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went,
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view,
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue,
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven!
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
O shrive her and wed not!"

In tears, the bride's mother— "Sir Priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company!"
In wrath, the bride's lover—"The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear—
Be the charge proved or said not!"

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
"Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary!*
Is it used for the praying?"

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled with smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest—"Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying!"

The bridegroom spake low, and led onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun—
They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest, without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him, too strong for his will:
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

"I have sinned," quoth he, "I have sinned, I wot"—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought;
They dropped fast on the book: but he read on the same,—
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
They who knelt down together, arise up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide—
Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
His lip stung her with cold: she glanced upwardly mute:
"Mine own wife," he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,—
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine, and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her.
But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
She has lived, and foregone him!

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
"Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching!"

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth;
And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
"Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!
God, hear my beseeching!"

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay;
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day—
Wild she sprang to her feet,—"I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying!"

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow; and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
"I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk!
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
Of the stedfast skies above, the running brooks below;—

All things are the same but I;—only I am dreary;
And, mother, of my dreariness, behold me very weary.

"Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring,
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering.
The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine."
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them, all mournfully, to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint, and gently shook her head—
"The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*," she said:
"The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at Heaven, but *I* must turn away,—
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause—"And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?—
If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so strong,—
And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path from the wrong?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and Heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which beareth seven times seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast,
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best!"
Then breaking into tears,—"Dear God," she cried, "and must we see
All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or hear Thee in the wind?
Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light behind?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal, to need Thee on that road;
But woe being come, the soul is dumb, that crieth not on 'God.'"

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever mused thus—
"*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us*?"
But her young brother stayed his sobs, and knelt beside her knee,
—"Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word for me?"
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers bloomed no more—
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour before.
Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth's nourishment to reach;—
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out of each!

—o—

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.

Seven maidens 'neath the midnight
 Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
 The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
 And earth is slumbering deep;
The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams
 That wander through her sleep.
  The river floweth on.

II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
 Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart, wherein
 No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
 Nor drieth with the dew:—
Oh, calm it, God! *Thy* calm is broad
 To cover spirits, too.
  The river floweth on.

III.

The maidens lean them over
 The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
 And gaze adown the tide:

For each within a little boat
 A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's weight
 Or scarlet rose half shut.
  The river floweth on.

IV.

Of a shell of cocoa carven,
 Each little boat is made:
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
 And carries a hope unsaid.
And when the boat hath carried the lamp
 Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maidens are sure that love will endure,
 But love will fail with light.
  The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
 To symbolize the soul,
The stars, untroubled by the wind,
 Unwearied as they roll:
And yet the soul, by instinct sad,
 Reverts to symbols low –
To that small flame, whose very name,
 Breathed o'er it, shakes it so.
  The river floweth on

VI.

Six boats are on the river,
 Seven maidens on the shore;
 While still above them stedfastly
Go, the stars shine evermore.
 A little boats, go soft and safe,
The d guard the symbol spark !–-
 boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark.
  The river floweth on.

VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth
  Where onwardly they float;
That look in her dilating eyes
  Might seem to drive her boat;
Her eyes have caught the fire they watch,
  And kindling, unawares,
That hopeful while, she lets a smile
  Creep silent through her prayers.
The river floweth on.

VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered?
  She riseth from her knee,
She holds her dark, wet locks away—
  There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
  "Nuleeni, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
  For all the wreck of mine."
The river floweth on.

IX.

"I do remember watching
  Beside this river-bed,
When on my childish knee was laid
  My dying father's head.
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
  From falling on his face—
What doth it prove, when Death and Love
  Choose out the self-same place?"
The river floweth on.

X.

"They say the dead are joyful,
  The death-change here receiving.
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
  Where joy comes to the living?

Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—
  Light up the waters rather!
I weep no faithless lover where
  I wept a loving father."
The river floweth on.

XI.

"My heart foretold his falsehood,
  Ere my little boat grew dim:
And though I closed mine eyes to dream
  That one last dream of *him*,
They shall not now be wet to see
  The shining vision go:
From earth's cold love, I look above
  To the holy house of snow." *
The river floweth on.

XII.

"Come *thou*—thou never knewest
  A grief, that thou shouldst fear one;
Thou wearest still the happy look
  That shines beneath a dear one!
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,†
  Thy cuckoo in the grove;
And all the three broad worlds, for thee
  Are full of wandering love."
The river floweth on.

XIII.

"Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?
  What secret wouldst thou cover?
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
  And I can guess thy lover:
I heard thee sob his name in sleep . . .
  It was a name I knew—
Come, little maid, be not afraid—
  But let us prove him true!"
The river floweth on.

* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmeleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

† Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

XIV.

The little maiden cometh—
  She cometh shy and slow;
I ween she seeth through her lids
  They drop adown so low:
Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
  She stands and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red, as if she said
  The name she only thought.
                    The river floweth on.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
  She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
  The fitful radiance came:—
"Go, little boat; go, soft and safe,
  And guard the symbol spark!"
Soft, safe doth float the little boat
  Across the waters dark.
                    The river floweth on.

XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded;
  The light they cannot reach:
She turneth with that sudden smile
  She learnt before her speech—
"I do not hear his voice! the tears
  Have dimmed my light away!
But the symbol light will last to-night—
  The love will last for aye."
                    The river floweth on.

XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her—
  Out-spake she bitterly:
"By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
  Wilt vow a vow to me?"—

Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
  Soft answer maketh she:
"By loves that last when lights are past,
  I vow that vow to thee!"
                    The river floweth on.

XVIII

An earthly look had Luti,
  Though her voice was deep as prayer—
"The rice is gathered from the plains
  To cast upon thine hair! *
But when *he* comes, his marriage-band
  Around thy neck to throw,
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*
  When Luti suffers woe."
                    The river floweth on.

XIX.

"And when in seasons after,
  Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
  What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
  His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*
  When Luti speaks of wrong."
                    The river floweth on.

XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
  Yet softly answered she—
"By loves that last when lights are past,
  I vowed that vow to thee.
But why glads it thee, that a bride-day be
  By a word of *woe* defiled?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song
  From the ear of a sinless child?"—

* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

"*Why!*" Luti said, and her laugh was dread,
  And her eyes dilated wild—
"That the fair new love may her bridegroom prove,
  And the father shame the child."
                The river floweth on.

XXI.

"Thou flowest still, O river,
  Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,*
  Thy charmèd lute a tune!
He mixed his voice with thine—and *his*
  Was all I heard around;
But now, beside his chosen bride,
  I hear the river's sound."
                The river floweth on.

XXII.

"I gaze upon her beauty,
  Through the tresses that enwreathe it:
The light above thy wave, is hers—
  My rest, alone beneath it.
Oh, give me back the dying look
  My father gave thy water!
Give back!—and let a little love
  O'erwatch his weary daughter!"
                The river floweth on.

XXIII.

"Give back!" she hath departed—
  The word is wandering with her;
And the stricken maidens hear afar
  The step and cry together.
Frail symbols? None are frail enow
  For mortal joys to borrow!—
While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
  She weepeth, dark with sorrow.
                The river floweth on.

* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

I.

In the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly.
And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the Dead,
When the rebecks are all done."

II.

Six abeles i' the kirkyard grow, on the northside in a row,—
Toll slowly.
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly.
And between the river flowing, and the fair green trees a-growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey:—
Toll slowly.
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,—
Toll slowly.
While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

I.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart, having prayed.

II

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

III.

Down the sun dropt, large and red, on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
Lance and spearhead on the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

IV.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.
Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
When the wind is on its track.

V.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly.
And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
And to-night, anears its fall.

VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,—
Toll slowly.
One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the doors,
"May good angels bless our home."

VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs.

VIII.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl
Toll slowly.
Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,
To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

IX.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,—
Toll slowly.
Unto both those Lords of Leigh spake she out right sovranly,
"My will runneth as my blood.

X.

"And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins," she said,—
Toll slowly.
"'Tis my will, as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged."

XI.

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—
Toll slowly.
"Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small
For so large a will, in sooth."

XII.

She too smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly.
"Little hand clasps muckle gold; or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!"

XIII.

Then the young Lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,—
Toll slowly.
"He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death."

XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—
Toll slowly.
"Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel," quoth she,
"And he moans not where he lies.

XV.

"But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward!"—
Toll slowly.
"By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward."

XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread,—
Toll slowly.
Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode amain:—
Toll slowly.
Wild the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the turf
In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued amain;—
Toll slowly.
Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling, hoof on hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

XIX.

And the bridegroom led the flight, on his red-roan steed of might,—
Toll slowly.
And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

XX.

"Dost thou fear?" he said at last;—"Nay!" she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly.
"Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!"

XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—
Toll slowly.
Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—down the banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.
In the courtyard rose the cry—"Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!"
But she never heard them shout.

XXIII.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly.
"I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,"
Were the words which she did speak.

XXIV.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day,—
Toll slowly.
When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

XXV.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.
And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so grey of blee,—
Toll slowly.
And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

XXVII.

Cried aloud—"So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May!"—
Toll slowly.
"Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII.

"Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the hound?"—
Toll slowly.
"Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

XXIX.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,"—
Toll slowly.
"Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

XXX.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a wife's name thee behove,"—
Toll slowly.
"Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth,"—
Toll slowly.
"He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

XXXII.

"I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail,"—
Toll slowly.
"'Little hand and muckle gold' close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail."

XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest

XXXIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—
Toll slowly.
'Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my Lord of
Leigh,—
But thou boastest little wit."

XXXV.

In her tire glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly,—
Toll slowly.
She blushed half from her disdain— half, her beauty was so plain,
—"Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!"

XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in—"Since ye gave me blame
herein,"—
Toll slowly.
"That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

XXXVII.

"It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away:"—
Toll slowly.
"Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

XXXVIII.

"On your arms I loose mine hair;—comb it smooth and crown it fair,"—
Toll slowly.
"I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's there!"

XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate,—
Toll slowly.
They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the stone,—
Toll slowly.
"Sword," he thought, with inward laugh, "ill thou servest for a staff,
When thy nobler use is done!

XLII.

"Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower is lost, and shame begun:"—
Toll slowly.
"If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

"If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,"—
Toll slowly.
"But if *I* die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

"Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake;"—
Toll slowly.
"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

"And no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too heavily,"—
Toll slowly.
"And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI.

"Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,"—
Toll slowly.
"Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII.

"These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily:"—
Toll slowly.
"And if *I* die here apart,—o'er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII.

"When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"—
Toll slowly.
"That new corse new peace shall bring; and a blessed, blessed thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX.

"Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,"—
Toll slowly.
"Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L.

"With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat:"—
Toll slowly.
"And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head,
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

"She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,"—
Toll slowly.
"But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

"Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,"—
Toll slowly.
"That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief."

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange and dim,—
Toll slowly.
Till his true men in the place wished they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him.

LIV.

"One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!"
Toll slowly.
"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service worth the cost,"
—Bold they stood around to swear.

LV.

"Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we failed in there,"—
Toll slowly.
"Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!"—
Pale they stood around—to swear.

LVI.

"One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!"
Toll slowly.
"Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,—
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height!"—
Toll slowly.
"Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far,—
He shall bear me far to-night."

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so,—
Toll slowly.
—"'Las! the noble heart," they thought,—"he in sooth is grief-distraught.—
Would we stood here with the foe!"

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—
Toll slowly.
"Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly."

LX.

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,—
Toll slowly.
Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors;
But they goad him up the stair.

LXI.

Then from out her bower chambère did the Duchess May repair,—
Toll slowly.
"Tell me now what is your need," said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?"

LXII.

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe,—
Toll slowly.
And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII.

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday,"—
Toll slowly.
"One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech.—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV.

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed from stall,"—
Toll slowly.
"'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

LXV.

"And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall."—
Toll slowly
"Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead,
If he rides the castle-wall."

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,—
Toll slowly.
And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII.

"Get thee in, thou soft ladye!—here, is never a place for thee!"—
Toll slowly.
"Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh."

LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,—
Toll slowly.
Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—
Toll slowly.
"Go to, faithful friends, go to!—Judge no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!"

LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke:—
Toll slowly.
Soft he neighed to answer her; and then followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her treading,
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.
Out they swept, a vision steady,— noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,—
Toll slowly.
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her eyes,
Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints bless thy life!"—
Toll slowly.
In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife."

LXXV.

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun:"—
Toll slowly.
"But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so, true and good
I will never do this one.

LXXVI.

"Now, by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity,"
Toll slowly.
"In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII.

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand, pardie,"—
Toll slowly.
"If, this hour, on castle wall, can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*

LXXVIII.

"So the sweet saints with me be," (did she utter solemnly),—
Toll slowly.
"If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-well,—
Toll slowly.
"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?'

LXXX.

She clang closer to his knee—"Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!"—
Toll slowly.
"Mock me not; for otherwhere, than along the greenwood fair,
Have I ridden fast with thee!

LXXXI.

"Fast I rode, with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house!"
Toll slowly.
"What! and would you men should reck, that I dared more for love's sake,
As a bride than as a spouse?

LXXXII.

"What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,"—
Toll slowly.
"That a bride may keep your side, while through castle-gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—
Toll slowly.
With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,—but the small hands closed again,—
Toll slowly.
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track,
With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door,—
Toll slowly.
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of "kill!" and "flee!"
Strike up clear the general roar.

LXXXVI.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed and clung again,—
Toll slowly.
Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVII.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering lips half-shut,—
Toll slowly.
Her head fallen as in swound,—hair and knee swept on the ground,—
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed, back-thrown on the slippery coping-
stone,—
Toll slowly.
Back the iron hoofs did grind, on the battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down.

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank bestrode,—
Toll slowly.
"Friends, and brothers! save my wife!—Pardon, sweet, in
change for life,—
But I ride alone to God."

XC.

Straight as if the Holy Name did upbreathe her as a flame,—
Toll slowly.
She upsprang, she rose upright:—in his selle she sate in sight;
By her love she overcame.

XCI.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at
rest,—
Toll slowly.
"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in the beechwood's old
chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best."

XCII.

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose—
in vain,—
Toll slowly.
For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge, rears amain.

XCIII.

And he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly.
And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off;
And his face grows fierce and thin!

XCIV.

And a look of human woe, from his staring eyes did go,—
Toll slowly.
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below,—

XCV.

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell," still she cried, "i' the old chapelle!"—
Toll slowly.
Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the kirkyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,—
Toll slowly.
And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow-tree I a little grave did see,—
Toll slowly.
Where was graved,—"HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE."

IV.

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,—
Toll slowly.
Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

V.

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the
field,—
Though your heart and brain were rash,—

VI.

Now, your will is all unwilled—now, your pulses are all stilled,—
Toll slowly.
Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,—
Toll slowly.
And the children might be bold to pluck the kingscups from
your mould,
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the alder near, in spring,—
Toll slowly.
Let her build her nest, and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

IX.

In your patience ye are strong; cold and heat ye take not
wrong:—
Toll slowly.
When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our
incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

"So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part."
WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side, on the grass:
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by:
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

III.

Little Ellie sits alone,—
And the smile, she softly useth,
Fills the silence like a speech;
While she thinks what shall be done,—
And the sweetest pleasure chooseth,
For her future within reach.

IV.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooseth . . . "I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds!
He shall love me without guile;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

V.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath,—
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

VI.

"And the steed, it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind;
And the hoofs, along the sod,
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII.

"But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in;
And I kneel here for thy grace.'

VIII.

"Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,—
With the red-roan steed anear him,
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

IX

"Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say—
Nathless, maiden brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter, and dissemble
'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

X

"Then he will ride through the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

XI

"Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain,
And kneel down beside my feet—
'Lo! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?'

XII

"And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—'Pardon
If he comes to take my love.'

XIII

"Then the young foot-page will run—
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
'I am a duke's eldest son!
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!'

XIV

"He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds;
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds."

XV

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the *two*.

XVI

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops,
Lo! the wild swan had deserted—
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

XVII

Ellie went home sad and slow;
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not! but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done!
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon,
I am weary! I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding gown.

II.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet,
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

III.

Lean thy face down! drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold.
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

IV.

Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah! so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such—
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

V.

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness — tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
"Child, be mother to this child!"

VI.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love, that left me with a wound,
Life itself, that turneth round!

VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,—
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves — I cannot speak;
I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm beating joy and dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

IX.

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.

Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,—
And would kiss thee at my will.

X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so! think instead
How the sunshine over head
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI.

What a day it was, that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away,
At the sight of the great sky:
And the Silence, as it stood
In the Glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud—and bud.

XII.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,—
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view—
How we talked there! thrushes soft
Sang our pauses out—or oft
Bleatings took them from the croft.

XIII.

Till the pleasure, grown too strong,
Left me muter evermore;
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain:
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so—do not shake—
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

XVI.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong, perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again!
Women cannot judge for men.

XVII.

Had he seen thee, when he swore
He would love but me alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee, who art best
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
Flying straightway to the light:

Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
Up the street! is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

XIX.

And that hour—beneath the beech,—
When I listened in a dream,
And he said, in his deep speech,
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain—

XX.

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon:
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,—
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a "Poor thing" negligence.

XXII.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

XXIII.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
It was best as it befell!
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

XXIV.

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballads sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same—
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

XXV.

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I; that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

X

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
Treads the crocus underfoot—
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—
Thou, like merry summer-bee!
Fit that *I* be plucked for *thee*.

XXVII.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns—
I have lived my season out,—
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.

Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—So angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,—
Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet—
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,—
That if any friend should come
(To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at night, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the Dark up, day and night.

XXXI.

On that grave drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear,
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun—
Or forget me—smiling on!

XXXII

Art thou near me? nearer? so!
Kiss me close upon the eyes,—
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly, as it used to rise,
When I watched the morning gray
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII

So,—no more vain words be said!—
The hosannas nearer roll.
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,—
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,—
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up, through angels' hands of fire!—
I aspire while I expire!—

—o—

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er
you;
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will.
I am humbled who was humble! Friend,—I bow my head
before you!
You should lead me to my peasants:—but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter; she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed
air;
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-eagles
Follow far on the direction of her little dove-like hand—
Trailing on a thundrous vapour underneath the starry vigils,
So to mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder
presence;
Upon princely suitors suing, she has looked in her disdain:
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants;
What was *I* that I should love her—save for feeling of the pain?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings!

Many vassals bow before her, as her chariot sweeps their door-
ways;
She hath blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she!
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile, which she used, to smile
on *me*.

She has voters in the Commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine:
Even the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine and the chalice:
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet-uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With their critical deductions for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;—"Will your book appear this summer?"
Then returning to each other—"Yes, our plans are for the moors;"
Then with whisper dropped behind me—"There he is! the latest comer!
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

"Quite low-born! self-educated! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind:
You may speak, he does not hear you; and besides, he writes no satire,—
These new charmers who keep serpents have the antique sting resigned."

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them,—
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overrung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
"Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that, able to confer it,
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall?"

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speaking ·
But because a silence followed it, flushed scarlet, as for shame;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—"I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,"—
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming,
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare--but only where God asked the thrushes first –
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands. . . . for the human world, at worst."

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed around right queenly;
And I bowed--I could not answer! Alternated light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind!
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadows sweep;
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings, at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me, with her silver-corded speeches,
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,—
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river, through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard, till we lost them in the hills;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens, through the laurels and abelês.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture, gathered closely to her throat;
With the golden ringlets in her neck, just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly: her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek:
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly,—as if they had by fitness
Won the secret of a happy dream, she does not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden:
And I walked among her noble friends, and could not keep behind;
Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

"But within this swarded circle, into which the lime-walk brings us—
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,—
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us,
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

"The live air that waves the lilies, waves the slender jet of water,
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint!
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep, she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy quaint.

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers:
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:
And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

"That the essential meaning growing, may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought, as I conceive it: it applies more high and low,—
Our true noblemen will often, through right nobleness, grow humble,
And assert an inward honour, by denying outward show."

"Nay, your Silence," said I, "truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law, as most ignoble men.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds:
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's marble—in another case, the weed's."

"Not so quickly!" she retorted,—"I confess, where'er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book, which now reads dryly, and sit down with Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair:
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station,
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!—

With the trees around, not so distant, but you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow, the leaves in and outward move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
And recoiling backward, trembling with the too much light above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me, by the spirit, to her feet—
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of oath, and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in the
gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before;
And the river running under; and across it, from the rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various, of our own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded
down!—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted
idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep down
the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity!—

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
For the echo, in you, breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate, through which you drive
them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us
flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,—
She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the
notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced in
the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars—
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we
were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always
thought them –
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth - and often she speaks lightly;
Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve;
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly,
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things—substance
—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the
meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear.
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me, when I said,—"The Age culls
simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars—
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the
temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

"For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous, wondrous age,'
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,—
Or if angels will commend us, at the goal of pilgrimage.

"Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without
bane?—
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical white
horses,
Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the
mane?

"If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power conferring—
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death."

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her certes,
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely!—thought, no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did, the waves—
And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sate alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene—
For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you *would!*"
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—unelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful, fond of art, and letters too;
Just a good man, made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the hearkening.
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides, darkening,
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position, . . .
For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
And she answered, answered gently—"Nay, my lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it,
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points, less easy to decide."

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn —
"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-statured in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you, — and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded! waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration!
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars, when speared!
And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale:
Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman,
In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers,
Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though leaf-verdant,—
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purples and the gold,
And the "landed stakes" and lordships—all, that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you, Madam,
But for better souls, that nearer to the height of yours have trod—
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing!
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

"Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning,
That comes quickly—quick as sin does! ay, and often works to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within

"What right have you, Madam, gazing in your shining mirror daily,
Getting, so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must adore,—
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily,
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more?

"Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned—with [illegible] spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to van[illegible] vain, [illegible]mile were not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turnin[illegible] words to grace;

"What right *can* you have, God's other works, to scorn, despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
But as Pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them,
In the hope of living,—dying,—near that sweetness of your mouth?

"Have you any answer, Madam? If my spirit were less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with more vibrant silver strings—
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—'Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.'

"As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her—
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!"

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need not write them fuller,
And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had scarce been duller,
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with thunder,
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said "Bertram!" it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with
queenly bearing,
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full
hearing
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
instead— '

I had borne it!—but that "Bertram'—why, it lies there on the
paper
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge the
weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed swimming
in a vapour,—
And her gentleness did shame me, whom her scorn made
desolate

So, struck backward, and exhausted with that inward flow of
passion
Which had passed, in deadly rushing, into forms of abstract
truth,
With a logic agonizing through unfit denunciation,—
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of
youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely,
I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed, was
true—
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing
nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could
do!—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and
occasioned,—
As a wild horse, through a city, runs with lightning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, im-
passioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and
dies—

So I fell, struck down before her! Do you blame me, friend, for weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like a stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness!
When the light came, I was lying in this chamber, and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,—
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone!
I shall leave this house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her hands,—
Out of reach of her derisions, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious;
I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness, in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then.*

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every leaf:
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple-lattice curtains, how she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet, o'er the tossing of his wail.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid,
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows;
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—"Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the cheeks of calm expression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curvèd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush! no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly;
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as *I*?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea,
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this
 dream of THINE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told
 him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her,—
And she whispered low in triumph—"It shall be as I have
 sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble,—noble, certes,
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born."



THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
 And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark . . .
 I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
 I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew.
 And round me and round me ye go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
 Who in your names works sin and woe.

III

And thus I thought that I would come
  And kneel here where I knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
  In undertone to the ocean's roar ,
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
  Ye blessed in freedom's evermore

IV

I am black, I am black ,
  And yet God made me, they say.
But if He did so, smiling back
  He must have cast His work away
Under the feet of His white creatures,
With a look of scorn,— that the dusky features
  Might be trodden again to clay

V

And yet He has made dark things
  To be glad and merry as light
There's a little dark bird sits and sings
  There's a dark stream ripples out of sight ,
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
  O'er the face of the darkest night

VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark !
  Ah, God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
  Our blackness shuts like prison bars
The poor souls crouch so far behind,
That never a comfort can they find
  By reaching through the prison bars

VII

Indeed, we live beneath the sky, . .
  That great smooth Hand of God, stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
  To bless them from the fear and doubt,

Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
  Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
  They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost:
  And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen
  Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!—
  But, once, I laughed in girlish glee;
For one of my colour stood in the track
  Where the drivers drove, and looked at me—
And tender and full was the look he gave:
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—
  I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
  As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
  To conquer the world, we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day,
We did not mind, we went one way,
  And no better a liberty sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
  He said "I love you" as he passed:
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
  I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook, he smiled in the hut
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut,
  Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;
  Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it along
  My various notes, the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could hear,
  It was only a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea—
  We were two to love, and two to pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
  Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
And now I cry who am but one,
  How wilt Thou speak to-day?—

XIV.

We were black, we were black!—
  We had no claim to love and bliss:
What marvel, if each turned to lack?
  They wrung my cold hands out of his,
They dragged him . . . where? . . . I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust! . . . not much,
  Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain as *this!*

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
  Mere grief's too good for such as I.
So the white men brought the shame ere long
  To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
  To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!—
  I wore a child upon my breast . .
An amulet that hung too slack,
  And, in my unrest, could not rest:

Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
  Until all ended for the best:

XVII

For hark! I will tell you low . . . low . . .
  I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
  Was far too white . . . too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
  Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear
  To look in his face, it was so white
I covered him up with a kerchief there,
  I covered his face in close and tight
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
  Ha, ha! he wanted his master right

XIX

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
  His little feet that never grew—
He struck them out, as it was meet,
  Against my heart to break it through.
I might have sung and made him mild—
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
  The only song I knew.

XX

I pulled the kerchief very close:
  He could not see the sun, I swear,
More, then, alive, than now he does
  From between the roots of the mango . . . where?
. . . I know where. Close! a child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
  When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad . . .
The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold, . . .
I dared to lift up just a fold . . .
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
(I laugh to think on't at this hour! . . .)
Your fine white angels, who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power, . . .
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
As the humming bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, for the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro;
And it lay on my heart like a stone . . . as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
I carried the little body on,
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run:

They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonishment,—
  They could see God sit on His throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
  I bore it on through the forest . . . on:
And when I felt it was tired at last,
  I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
  Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . . .
  Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed, . . .
All, changed to black earth, . . . nothing white,
  A dark child in the dark,—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young:
I sate down smiling there and sung
  The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
  The white child and black mother, thus:
For, as I sang it, soft and wild
  The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate!
It was the dead child singing that,
  To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
  Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay,
The free sun rideth gloriously;
  But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
  Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter sons!
  Ah, ah! they are on me—they hunt in a ring—
Keep off! I brave you all at once—
  I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink
  From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
  I wish you, who stand there five a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
  A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangos!—Yes, but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
  And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.
  I see you staring in my face—
I know you, staring, shrinking back—
  Ye are born of the Washington-race:
And this land is the free America:
And this mark on my wrist . . . (I prove what I say)
  Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
  I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around,
  As softly as I might have done
My very own child!—From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
  O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
  For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
  Each loathing each: and all forget

The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While He sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. We who bleed .
(Stand off!) *we* help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain—
In the name of the white child, waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

—o—

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

"Φεῦ φεῦ, τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ' ὄμμασιν, τέκνα;"—MEDEA.

I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,—
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!—
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?—
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago—
The old tree is leafless in the forest—
The old year is ending in the frost—
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest—
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's grief abhorrent, draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy—
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;"
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
sk the old why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,—
we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

You IV.
I h say the young children, "it may happen
I only at we die before our time.
As so died last year—the grave is shapen
My very a snowball, in the rime.
Up to the o the pit prepared to take her—
O slaves, for any work in the close clay:
wherein she lieth none will wake her,
p, little Alice! it is day.'
Whips, curses hat grave, in sun and shower,
For in this own, little Alice never cries!—
Two kinds of m ce, be sure we should not know her,
Each loathing e me, for growing in her eyes,—

And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud, by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

V.

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI.

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap—
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal dark, underground—
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

VII.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our head, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places—
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—
Turns the long light that droppeth down the wall—
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.—

And, all day, the iron wheels are droning;
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to day!'"

VIII.

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX.

Now, tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray—
So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word!
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

X.

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember;
And at midnight's hour of harm,—
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations; and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however we may be open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

XI.

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
And the children doubt of each.

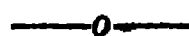
XII.

And well may the children weep before you;
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of man, but not the wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm—
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,—
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
No dear remembrance keep,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly:
Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII.

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in their places,
With eyes meant for Deity;—

"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
  Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
  And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,
    And your purple shows your path;
But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence
    Than the strong man in his wrath!"



A CHILD ASLEEP.

I.

How he sleepeth! having drunken
  Weary childhood's mandragore,
From his pretty eyes have sunken
  Pleasures, to make room for more—
Sleeping near the withered nosegay, which he pulled the day before.

II.

Nosegays! leave them for the waking:
  Throw them earthward where they grew.
Dim are such, beside the breaking
  Amaranths he looks unto—
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
  From the paths they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
  Swing against him in a wreath—
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

IV.

Vision unto vision calleth,
  While the young child dreameth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
  With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden, yestermorn, by summer sun.

V.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds away.
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing!—Stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

VI.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,-
So the Spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,—
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,—
While thou smilest, . . . not in sooth
Thy smile . . . but the overfair one, dropt from some æthereal mouth.

VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it fade.

IX.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb—
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room—
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as they come.

X.

Speak not! he is consecrated—
Breathe no breath across his eyes.
Lifted up and separated,
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held in cloistral sanctities.

XI

Could ye bless him—father—mother?
  Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
  And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess yourselves too weak?

XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
  Ye are troubled—he, at ease:
From his slumber, virtue winful
  Floweth outward with increase—
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace—and go in peace.

——o——

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

I

When ye stood up in the house
  With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
  First, the touch of Love did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
  By the heartlight cast before,
And, of all Beloveds, none
  Standing farther than the door—
Not a name being dear to thought,
  With its owner beyond call,—
Nor a face, unless it brought
  Its own shadow to the wall,—
When the worst recorded change
  Was of apple dropt from bough,—
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
  Than love's treason can seem now,—
Then, the Loving took you up
  Soft, upon their elder knees,—
Telling why the statues droop
  Underneath the churchyard trees,

And how *ye* must lie beneath them,
    Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
    And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
Oh! ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said,
        A tale of fairy ships
            With a swan-wing for a sail!—
        Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
            For the merry, merry tale!—
    So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
    Of the men of long ago—
Of the pale bewildering glories
    Shining farther than we know,—
Of the heroes with the laurel,
    Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
    For that beauteous Helena,—
How Achilles at the portal
    Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half immortal,
    Met the *keitai* with a cry,—
How Ulysses left the sunlight
    For the pale eidolon race,
Blank and passive through the dun light,
    Staring blindly on his face.
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
    With calm smile and wounded heart,—
"Sweet, it hurts not!"— how Admetus
    Saw his blessed one depart.
How King Arthur proved his mission,—
    And Sir Roland wound his horn,—
And at Sangreal's moony vision
    Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh! ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while ye read,
        That this death, then, must be found
        A Valhalla for the crowned—
        The heroic who prevail.

None, be sure, can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale !—
So, awfully, ye thought upon the Dead.

III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head !—
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud -
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within ;
All things changed ! you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since,—your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy ;
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament :
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain :
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divine one, ye could utter
With less trembling in your prayers !
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,—

And your prayers go up in wail!
—"Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonised on cross?
Art Thou reading all its tale?"
So, mournfully, ye think upon the Dead.

IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,
And the drops will slacken so;—
Weep, weep;—and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think: the shadow on the dial,
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres;—
Learn: the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope; with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love: the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work: make clear the forest tangles
Of the wildest stranger land.
Trust: the blessed deathly angels
Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand!"
By the heart's wound when most gory,
By the longest agony.
Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said
"My Beloved, is it so?
Have ye tasted of my woe?—
Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!"
He stands brightly where the shade is,
With the keys of Death and Hades,
And there, ends the mournful tale.—
So, hopefully, ye think upon the Dead.

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT

'Neath my moon, what doest thou,
With a somewhat paler brow
Than she giveth to the ocean?
He, without a pulse or motion,
Muttering low before her stands,
Lifting his invoking hands,
Like a seer before a sprite,
To catch her oracles of light.
But thy soul out-trembles now
Many pulses on thy brow!
Where be all thy laughters clear,
Others laughed alone to hear?
Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?
Where, thy dances, turned to game?
Where, thy festive companies,
Moonèd o'er with ladies' eyes,
All more bright for thee, I trow?
'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

THE MERRY MAN

I am digging my warm heart,
Till I find its coldest part.
I am digging wide and low,
Further than a spade will go,
Till that, when the pit is deep
And large enough, I there may heap
All my present pain and past
Joy, dead things that look aghast
By the daylight.—Now 'tis done!
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
Treasures which my hands have holden,
Till the chillness made them ache;
Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake

If birds were in a singing strain,
And for less cause, sleep again,
Of the moss seat in the wood,
Where I trysted solitude
Of the hill top, where the wind
Used to follow me behind,
Then in sudden rush to blind
Both my glad eyes with my hair,
Taken gladly in the snare!

Of the climbing up the rocks,—
Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
Which retain beneath them now
Only shadow of the bough.
Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,—
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven!
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin,
Of large leaved philosophy,
Leaning from my childish knee,
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul kissed for the first dear time,—
Greek or English,—ere I knew
Life was not a poem too!
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun

Of the glorious ambitions,
Yet unquenched by their fruitions,
Of the reading out the nights,
Of the straining of mad heights,
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few, than magnified,
Of praises, from the many earned,
When praise from love was undiscerned,
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
Softened by itself to sadness —
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these!
Throw in, dearer memories!—
Of voices—whereof but to speak,
Maketh mine all sunk and weak;
Of smiles, the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping;
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh
My looks to the ground for aye;
Of clasping hands—ah me! I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward, all this paining!
Partings, with the sting remaining;
Meetings, with a deeper throe,
Since the joy is ruined so;
Changes, with a fiery burning
(Shadows upon all the turning)
Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
Them, I have not breath to name!
Downward, downward, be they cast
In the pit! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over.
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently!
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary
With the rest sepùlchred be.
Finished now. The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it:
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
And *ai ai* written upon none.
Thus, whenever saileth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,
Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain:

And while she lisps, "I have not seen
Any place more smooth and clean" . .
Here she cometh!—Ha, ha!—who
Laughs as loud as I can do?

——o——

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

I.

The Earth is old;
Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold,
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold
She saith, "'Las me!—God's word that I was 'good'
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence when any sound comes, I am riven
By some sharp bolt And now no angel would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,
To glorify the lovely river fountains
That gush along their side
I see, O weary change! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong, and blood
And bitter words are poured upon mine head—
'O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,
A church for most remorseful melancholy!
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad.'
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every one,
Do keep me from a portion of my sun
Give praise in change for brightness!
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth."

II.

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man,
As by angel's shining ladder,
(May he find no cloud above!)
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder

All his days than now—
Sitting in the chestnut grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

"O rare, rare Earth!" he saith,
"I will praise thee presently;
Not to day, I have no breath!
I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow,
One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.
Presently it shall be done,
When I see which way those two have run;
When the mocking one at the filbert top
Shall leap a down, and beside me stop;
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee!"

IV.

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day,
Beside a wandering stream;
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head
"Earth, Earth." saith he,
"If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew;

If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew,
Looking off them, I might see
Some one very beauteous too,—
Then, Earth," saith he,
"I would praise . . . nay nay—*not thee!*"

V

Will the pedant name her next?
Crabbed with a crabbed text,
Sits he in his study nook,
With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossed knees
And a wrinkle deeply thrid
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow,
That Plato in "Parmenides"
Meant the same Spinosa did;
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,—
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath *he* to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? whene'er the sloping
Sunbeams, through his window, daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
"Derivatum est" would come.

VI

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head,
Because he wandered last that way,
With that one beneath the clay:
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
"Cease to weep, beloved!" has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.

The silence breaketh suddenly,—
"Earth, I praise thee!" crieth he:
"Thou hast a grave for also *me.*"

VII.

Ha, a poet! know him by
The ecstasy dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright, or sunken wan,
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow, uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining,
By the lip, which words of fire
Overflowing have burned white,
While they gave the nations light!
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the sign
From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair;—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low,)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves.

The faint mountains heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops
Viewless things his eyes can view
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night,
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me!*
God perfecteth His creation
With this recipient poet passion,
And makes the beautiful to be
I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God soul unto mine!
Praise me that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality!'

IX

There was silence None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway,
While he praised the Earth —
"O Earth
I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered, through a strong delight,
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush,
By thy silver founts that fall,

As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart, by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!
—Oh, beautiful
Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in Heaven is called good!
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go,
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low,
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse!

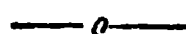
X

"Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river brink,
Where the ransomed tread!
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished!
Praised be thine active days,
And thy night time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read,
No night shall be therein
Praised be thy dwellings warm,
By household faggot's cheerful blaze
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood
Yea,—and better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing,—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,

Though dangerous words of human love
Be graven very near, above.

XI.

"Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us!
For thy cradles and thy tombs;
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer heat; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine!"



THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

"But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest."
MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity.*

I.

Sleep, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel, whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the south,
A restless shadow through the chamber waving:
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;
But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One?

III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings
Of any seraph wing!
Thus, noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One!

IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart; to all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live most.
[*She pauses.*

I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,—
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown.
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself! I bear, I bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye;
I look on His. I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

Yea, drop your lids more low,—
Ye are but fellow worshippers with me!
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

V

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem
The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,
Softened their horned faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born
The simple shepherds from the star lit brooks
Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonied hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel tongue
The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground,—
The incense, myrrh, and gold,
These baby hands were impotent to hold
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon Thy royal state!
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VI

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
On mortal lips,—"I am not proud"—*not proud!*
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed,
As others bow before Him, still mine heart
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
Watch o'er this sleep,—
Say of me as the Heavenly said—"Thou art
The blessedest of women!"—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
When I sit meek in Heaven!

VII.

For me—for me—
God knows that I am feeble like the rest!—
I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
Whose summits looked heaven laden,
Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
God's voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press
Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,
And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness
Then I knelt down, as silent as the night,
Too self renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the boundless blue
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears
God heard *them* falling after with His dew

VIII

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me—
This fair new Innocence, no sun did chance
To shine on, (for even Adam was no child)
Created from my nature all defiled,—
This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?—
Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,
Not open with the cry, "Unclean, unclean!"
More oft than any else beneath the skies?
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!
The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise,
Did all less lowly wait
Than I, upon Thy state!—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

IX.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His universe,
Come, crown me Him a king!
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
Their light where fell a curse,

And make a crowning for this kingly brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyreal star
  Sits in a sphere afar
  In shining ambuscade
  The child brow, crowned by none,
  Keeps its unchildlike shade.
  Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

X

Unchildlike shade!—no other babe doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou—
No small babe smiles, my watching heart has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips between,
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood
  Alas! our earthly good,
In Heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee:
  Yet sleep, my weary One!

XI

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—a sword?—
(*That* "smites the Shepherd!") then, I think aloud
The words "despised," "rejected,"—every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
  The DARLING on my knee
Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!
I must not die, with mother's work to do,
  And could not live and see

XII

  It is enough to bear
  This image still and fair—
  This holier in sleep,
  Than a saint at prayer
  This aspect of a child
  Who never sinned or smiled—
  This presence in an infant's face:
  This sadness most like love,

This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence,
It is so strong to move!
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,
A child, without the heart for play;
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From His first glory, and cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hand created, crying—Son!

XIII.

That tear fell not on Thee,
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in thy slumber!
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
Which through the vibratory palm trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One?—

AN ISLAND.

"All goeth but Goddis will."—Old Poet.

I.

My dream is of an island place,
Which distant seas keep lonely;
A little island, on whose face
The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight, that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
  Through woods that half-way ran !
As if the wild earth mimicked right
  The wilder heart of man ;
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder, than hearts ever are

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
  Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
  In falling from the skies—
Bringing within it all the roots
Of heavenly trees, and flowers and fruits.

V.

For saving where the grey rocks strike
  Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures, miser like,
  Hoard up some fountain treasure,—
(And e'en in them—stoop down and hear-
Leaf sounds with water in your ear !)

VI.

The place is all awave with trees—
  Limes, myrtles purple-beaded ,
Acacias having drunk the lees
  Of the night dew, faint-headed ;
And wan grey olive-woods, which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine
  Their plumy shades to throw ;
Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine,
  Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours
  That shining from above her,
When many Pleiades of flowers
  (Not one lost) star her over,
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being refracted by the dews

IX.

Wide petalled plants, that boldly drink
  The Amreeta of the sky,
Shut bells that, dull with rapture, sink,
  And lolling buds, half shy,
I cannot count them, but between
Is room for grass and mosses green,

X

And brooks, that glass in different strengths
  All colours in disorder,
Or, gathering up their silver lengths
  Beside their winding border,
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden

XI

Nor think each arched tree with each
  Too closely interlaces,
To admit of vistas out of reach,
  And broad moon lighted places,
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

XII

For all this island's creature full,
  Kept happy not by halves;
Mild cows, that at the vine wreaths pull,
  Then low back at their calves,
With tender lowings, as they feel
The warm mouths milking them for weal.

XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
  And harmless, leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
  And sheep unruled by shepherds,
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd—
  Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,
  Self sphered in those grand tails,
All creatures glad and safe, I deem,
No guns nor springes in my dream!

XV.

The island's edges are a wing
  With trees that overbranch
The sea with song birds, welcoming
  The curlews to green change,
And doves from half closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by

XVI.

One dove is answering in trust
  The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
  Have her mate's cooing in it;
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My soul in love bounds forwarder
  To meet the bounding waves!
Beside them straightway I repair,
  To live within the caves,
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII

Long winding caverns! glittering far
Into a crystal distance,
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
Shine clear, without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

XIX

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own:
Those who would change man's voice and use
For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's stedfast sympathies.

XX

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part;
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart:
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

XXI

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon, of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion,
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

XXII

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead,
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;
No earth, a mourner's tread.
We cannot say by stream or shade,
"I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed."

XXIII

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
  To shifting cloud or hour,—
And use our only epitaph
  To some bud turned a flower:
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in happiness and love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
  From fairest island birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
  Born singing! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
  Our smile turned lips shall reach,
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
  Shall glide into our speech —
(What music certes can you find
As soft as voices which are kind?)

XXVI.

And often by the joy without
  And in us, overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
  Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady;

XXVII

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
  He died in, longer knowing;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
  Been lost in Meles flowing,
Or poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him

XXVIII.

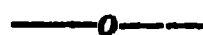
Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
  To make a place for prayer;
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there.
How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done,—Thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words!—
  They lift me from my dream.
The island fadeth with its swards,
  That did no more than seem!
The streams are dry, no sun could find—
The fruits are fallen, without wind!—

XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will
Our foolish wills undoeth!
And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
  Which morning-light subdueth;
And who would murmur and misdoubt,
When God's great sunrise finds him out?



THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ηδη νοερους
Πετασαι ταρσους.
SYNESIUS.

I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and hearken while it rolls.
  Very sad and very hoarse
  Certes is the flow of souls:
  Infinitest tendencies,

By the finite, prest and pent,—
In the finite, turbulent.
And how we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the ground!

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's chariot by,
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity,
The trail, on the street, of the poor man's broom,
That the lady, who walks to her palace home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust,
The tread of the business men, who must
Count their per cents. by the paces they take;
The cry of the babe, unheard of its mother,
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake,
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day,
The gin door's oath, that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief, and wrong upon hate,
The cabman's cry to get out of the way;
The dustman's call down the area grate,
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street, which is backed for gold;
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall,
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff,
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness;
The brothel's shriek, and the Newgate laugh;
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,
The grinder's face being nevertheless
Dry and vacant of even woe,
While the children's hearts are leaping so
At the merry music's winding
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train,
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life, though it hurry and strain!)
Creeping the populous houses through,

And nodding their plumes at either side,—
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and criëd;
At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying the morrow's coronals,
With a scarlet blush, to-day.—
  Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
    To multiply the dead!
  Hark! an upward shout is sent!
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
      The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young Queen goes to her parliament.
She turneth round her large blue eyes,
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people:
On either side she bows her head
  Lowly, with a queenly grace,
And smile most trusting innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother!
The thousands press before each other
    To bless her to her face:
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—"May the Queen rejoice
    In the people's liberties!"—

III.

    I dwell amid the city,
    And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly:
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
    And that is melancholy!—
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd city,
The blue sky covering thee, like God's great pity.

IV.

O blue sky! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peakèd hill

Out to the last verge of ocean—
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the winged steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From him, to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud!
Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by.
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear;
We can hearken and espy
Without either; we can journey,
Bold and gay, as knight to tourney;
And though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI.

I am gone from peopled town!
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body, which yet hears no sound;
For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have.
O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep,
Scarce known, because the valley trees
Cross those upland images—

O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching, to the western wave—
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII.

I have found a grassy niche,
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur, which
Is aspectable from the place,
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June,
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral,
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite . .
Cowslips and daisies, gold and white,
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think, the sea, they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky,
As warm and blue as that on high

VIII

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks, too steep
To be o'erbrowzed by the sheep,—
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet:
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two:
You can hear them as they greet;
You can hear that evermore

Distance softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing, —the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in their communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which, when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length,
Across your soul with a soul's strength ·
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
As of its grandeur, so its sorrow, —
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

X.

Alway! alway! must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green visioned banks, that are too steep
To be o'erbrowsed by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd!—Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straitest mood?—
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities,—that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

XI

God, God!—
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!
Thou knowest eyelids raised not always up
Unto Thy love, (as none of ours are) droop,
As ours, o'er many a tear!
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all.
Thou knowest,—Thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty,—we are oft but stricken deer,
Expiring in the woods—that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon.

XII

O blissful Mouth, which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls,—self spoilt!—by that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs,—by that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing—from the wrack,
Themselves have called around them, call them back—
Back to thee in continuous aspiration!
For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass
From city pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men,
Unless they travel upward to Thy Throne!
There, sittest THOU, the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins, and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the archangel, raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings!

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a Child.*

I.

Bettine, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight.
With such a loving duty,
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

II.

Before his shrine to doom thee,
Using the same child's smile,
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,
Save at his feet, and o'er his head.

III.

Digging thine heart, and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing.
For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
Their channel in the heart have found.

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight!
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight!
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love

VI

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope, came back to thee
Without a leaf Art laying
Its wet cold wing, no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom, secretly?

VII

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight!
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye,
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood

VIII

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles, and sublime in youth

IX

The poet's arms have wound thee,
breathes upon thy brow,
fts thee upward in the glow
his great genius round thee,—
ildlike poet undefiled
ing evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth, and say—

"Purple cloud the hill-top binding;
Folded hills, the valleys wind in;
Valleys, with fresh streams among you;
Streams, with bosky trees along you;
Trees, with many birds and blossoms;
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms;
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you,
To your fellow flowers beneath you;
Flowers, that constellate on earth;
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?"

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven, and smiled at last,
Self-answered so—
"Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top;
Hills that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath;
Valleys, sighing with the torrent;
Waters, streaked with branches horrent;
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found;
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground;
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun."

—o—

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

I.

We walked beside the sea,
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory--like the Princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
Uttered with burning breath, "Ho! victory!"
And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale;
So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
An universal and unmoving cloud,
On which, the cliffs permitted us to see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds, when gazed at by the crowd!
And, shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon nor stars were out.
They did not dare to tread so soon about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun.
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt;
And Silence's impassioned breathings round
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever—
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong,
The slackened cord along.

V.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,—

Dark wave and stone, unconsciously, were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used,
Of absent friends and memories unforsook;
And, had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply, each was sad



THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A forward shade, the only one,
(But shadows ever man pursue.)

II.

Familiar with the waves and free,
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul, God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay,
He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
And his eye waxèd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison, with their darksome shade:
And drooped his wing, and mournèd he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade

VIII

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky,
That hath no waves!) because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

—o—

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THAT POETESS.

I.

Thou bay-crowned living One, that o'er the bay-crowned Dead
art bowing,
And, o'er the shadeless moveless brow, the vital shadow throwing;
And, o'er the sighless songless lips, the wail and music wedding;
Dropping above the tranquil eyes, the tears not of their
shedding!—

II.

Take music from the silent Dead, whose meaning is completer;
Reserve thy tears for living brows, where all such tears are meeter;
And leave the violets in the grass, to brighten where thou
treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers—albeit "bring flowers,"
thou saidest.

III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute!" since both may come
to breaking:
Or flowers, to greet the "bride!" the heart's own beating works
its aching:
Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free
bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered!

IV.

But bring not near her solemn corse, the type of human seeming!
Lay only dust's stern verity upon her dust undreaming.
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,
Her sphered soul shall look on *them*, with eyes more bright and
holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire, for anguish of the burning?—
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for the
afflated
Woe? or the vision, for those tears, in which it shone dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered, while the world's cold hand her brow
was wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath, which breathed in all her
breathing;
Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and
moving—
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight: the Saviour she descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His bosom
lieth.
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments, flowing,—
There, learneth she the sweet "new song," she will not mourn in
knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and, as thy dust decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee, what now for Her, it
sayeth—
"Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
The footfall of her parting soul is softer than her singing!"



L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"
—*From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.*

I.

"Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?"—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy;
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
Her heart grew dark,—and groped there, as the blind,
To reach, across the waves, friends left behind—
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

II

It seemed not much to ask—*as I of you?*—
We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question over,—
And little, in the world the Loving do,
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

III

Love-learnèd, she had sung of love and love,—
And like a child, that, sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes,
By tears the solemn seas attested true,
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
She asked not,—Do you praise me, O my land?—
But,—"Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?"

V

Hers was the hand that played for many a year,
Love's silver phrase for England,—smooth and well!
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle,
In that lone moment, might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response,—"We think of *thee*,"
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content—content—with ocean's sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath

Those stars, content,—where last her song had gone,—
They, mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death? *

VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, "We think of *thee!*"
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,—
With all her visions unfulfilled, save one—
Her childhood's—of the palm trees in the sun
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII

"Do ye think of me as I think of you?"—
O friends,—O kindred, O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we, that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other, when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
Is this "Think of me as I think of you."

IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls! and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you?



CROWNED AND WEDDED



I

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
Her the child smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
To react holy from the world to childhood still in sight—

"Do you lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.



To erase it with a solemn vow,—a princely vow—to rule—
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,—
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower bless!

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled scene.
The priests stood stoled in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights,—and so, the civil ministers,—
And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east and west—
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, new crowned, flashed coronets to light.—
And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty.
And so, the DEAD—who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore—
The statesman, whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er it be;
The courtier, who, for no fair queen, will rise up to his knee;
The court-dame, who, for no court-tire, will leave her shroud behind;
The laureate, who no courtlier rhyme than "dust to dust" can find;
The kings and queens, who, having made that vow and worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them?—what meaning can it have?—
The King of kings, the rights of death—God's judgment and the grave!
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair Queen had vowed,
The living shouted "May she live! Victoria, live!" aloud—
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
"The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine, O crownèd Queen!"

III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and, in that oath, her childhood put away—
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—such lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let her vow to love!—
And though she be no less a queen—with purples hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,—
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness wait.
SHE vows to love, who vowed to rule—the chosen at her side;
Let none say, God preserve the Queen!—but rather, Bless the bride!
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch, but a wife, she to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the Queen! oh, breathe it inward low
She is a *woman*, and *beloved!*—and 'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-mind,
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

IV

And now, upon our Queen's last vow, what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown, will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray between,—
"The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crownèd Queen!"

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

Napoleon!—years ago, and that great word,
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword,
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

III.

Napoleon! Sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem; children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call:
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries: and the Ægyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand "For ever."

V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Ægyptian tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness. Shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice,
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it. Kingly men
Came down, in chidden babes' bewilderment,
From autocratic places—each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing —then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII

Napoleon! and the torrid vastitude
Of India felt, in throbbings of the air,
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound lines, drawn afresh in blood
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain!
And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

VIII

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy,
Oblivious of old flames—her laurel locked,
High ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked,—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer—Ay! and Frenchmen cast
A future from them, nobler than her past

IX.

For, verily, though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world,—none gave so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, to freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword, or fit an undersized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris' streets did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams,
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted high!
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere,
And open a clear sight, beyond the sky,
Of supreme empire: this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,—
And finding the long invocated peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII.

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose—
The nations stood up mute to count their dead
And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry
Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert sea.

XIV.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,—
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment day.

XV.

Nay! not so long!—France kept her old affection,
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, "Behold, thou England! I would have
The dead, whereof thou wottest, from that grave."

XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
"Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me."
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim—
But ask a little room too . . for thy shame!

XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare, and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England! men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred thy bay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a *shadow* not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to morrow's sun!
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

XIX.

And since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust,
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return
Orestes to Electra . . in his urn.

XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it,
Sleek-browed and smiling, "Let the burden 'bide!"
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down,

XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of Time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music,—under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

XXII.

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave deep, 'neath the cannon moulded column!*

XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields; provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—And this he *may*. For, dispossessed
Of any godship, lies the godlike arm—
The goat Jove sucked as likely to do harm.

XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a Gaul grave,—another kingdom won—
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon.

XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
And high-rayed light. He was a despot—granted!
But the *αὐτὸς* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French: he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply,
"Ye have my glory!"—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves. Each felt, Napoleon.

XXVII.

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed,
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee, unbent—
His hand, unclean—his aspiration, pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears, poured thus together,
Nobler than shouts: I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all:
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be better, I discern not—Angels may.



TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

I.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who, her own true faith, hath run,
  Through thy lower nature;*
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
  Gentle fellow-creature!

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
  Either side demurely,
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
  Of thy body purely.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.

III

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine, striking this,
Alchemise its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness

IV

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
Leaping like a charger

V

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches

VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unweary,—
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary

VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining

IX

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow

X

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing—
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing

XI

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble

XII

And this dog was satisfied,
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open

XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
Than such chamber keeping,
"Come out!" praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly, not scornfully,
  Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
  Therefore, and for ever.

XV

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
  Often, man or woman.
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men -
  Leaning from my Human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
  Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail--
Hands of gentle motion fail
  Nevermore, to pat thee!

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
  Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
  Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII

Whiskered cats arointed flee—
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
  Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
  Turn to daily rations!

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?-
Tears are in my eyes to feel
  Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,
Little canst thou joy or do,
  Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
  Pervious to thy nature,
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
  Loving fellow-creature!

——o——

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

In the pleasant orchard closes,
"God bless all our gains," say we;
But "May God bless all our losses,"
Better suits with our degree.—
Listen, gentle—ay, and simple! Listen, children on the knee!

II.

Green the land is, where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played -
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms, running up from glade to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest:
And a little wood seems clearer,
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest

IV.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement;
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content

V

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound:
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

VI.

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all;
And the squirrels crack the filberts, through their cheerful madrigal.

VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale;

And five apple-trees stand, dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their "All hail!"

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother,
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions, through the sunshine and the snow *

X.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey·
'Twas a straight walk, unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute.

XII.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dare to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude!
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

XV.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the lichens which entrapped me, and the barrier branches strong.

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close;
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
All adown its silver rind;
For, as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine, from the sky where it was shrined.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty, which I sing of thus to you.

XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter,
Than for any woodland wide.
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through, from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music, than for footsteps on the walk.

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place!
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

XXIV.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was enwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion did right sylvanly entwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees, either side the door, were
Growing lithe and growing all,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose, and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot,
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence, very rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,—
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made before me,
With fair counterparts in shade,
Of the fair serrated ivy leaves which slanted overhead

XXVIII.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

XXIX

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
Quick I turned my childish face;
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees, which surely knew it, in partaking of the grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why is nature sudden bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to understand

XXXII

Was she weary of rough doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause, in tender rueing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness sworn?

XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,—
And beyond St Catherine's chiming, on the blessed Sabbath days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my Fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little marble Naiad, sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters, at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me "Yea" or give me "Nay"—
Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virèlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion,
Dropped the music to my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower;
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past;
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true mountains,
I stood silently and still;
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair goodwill.

XLVII.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
To the beauty of the truth;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison;
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace.)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew—
By the advent of the snowdrop—by the rosemary and rue,—

LII

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair—
Never garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith—
Under leaf and oyer brier—
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween;
And her dreaming spirit flashèd
Through her body's fair white screen,—
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys green.

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child heart,
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave place, 'mid Colone's olives swart

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun,
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then,
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother men!

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood

LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure—
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure—
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light,
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet, for the very shame of bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
Hath been also lost by me;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false Humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away;—
Ye would answer me, "Farewell! you
Make sad company to-day;
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say."

LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground, with power;
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower!
And I suffered many losses; and my first was of the bower.

LXVII.

Laugh ye? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood,
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes overcame.

LXIX.

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind—
And the ivy leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's breadth more of red,
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost, then? Who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the solstice and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost—

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"ALL IS LOST . . . and *won!*"



THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun,
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid,
To sanctify her right

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I.
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me.
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white,
Well satisfied with dew and light,
And careless to be seen

Long years ago, it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all,—

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such

Or these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind,
That few would look at *them*

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud!—

Nor thought that gardener (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet

It did not move my grief, to see
The trace of human step departed
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me!

Friends, blame me not! a narrow ken
Hath childhood 'twixt the sun and sward;
We draw the moral afterward—
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall:
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white—
How should I know but that they might
Lead lives as glad as mine?

To make my hermit home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,—
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories! till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round: anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are;
No more for me!—myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought,
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray!

The time *is* past —and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When wiser, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven, —

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.



MY DOVES

O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!'—Goethe.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea
For, ever there, the sea winds go
With sunlit paces, to and fro

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
  Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
  Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
  Theirs hath the calmest fashion;
Their living voice the likest moves
  To lifeless intonation,—
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
  From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
  And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves!—who lately knew
The sky and wave, by warmth and blue!

And now, within the city prison,
  In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
  For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion—
  The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
  Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
  Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
  What human musings mean—
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant, as on the nest,
Beneath the sunny zone,
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And, 'neath the city's shade, can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city ways, with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street!
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings, within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields.
I will have humble thoughts, instead
Of silent, dewy fields.
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea!

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

Nine years old! The first of any
  Seem the happiest years that come —
  Yet when *I* was nine, I said
  No such word!—I thought, instead,
That the Greeks had used as many
  In besieging Ilium.

II

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
  To my childhood's haunted spring —
  I had life, like flowers and bees,
  In betwixt the country trees;
And the sun, the pleasure, taught me
  Which he teacheth every thing

III

If the rain fell, there was sorrow;—
  Little head leant on the pane,
  Little finger drawing down it
  The long trailing drops upon it,—
And the "Rain, rain, come to morrow,"
  Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
  Though you meet it with a jeer!
  If I said it long enough,
  Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush, with his pure Lydian,
  Was left only, to the ear.

V.

And the sun and I together
  Went a-rushing out of doors:
  We, our tender spirits, drew
  Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
  In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
  Through the grasses wet and fair,
  Straight I sought my garden-ground,
  With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear tree oversweeping
  A side shadow of green air

VII.

In the garden, lay supinely
  A huge giant, wrought of spade!
  Arms and legs were stretched at length,
  In a passive giant strength,—
And the meadow turf, cut finely,
  Round them laid and interlaid

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
  Such his title and degree
  With my rake I smoothed his brow,
  Both his cheeks I weeded through·
But a rhymer such as I am
  Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
  Staring, winking at the skies,
  Nose of gillyflowers and box,
  Scented grasses, put for locks -
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
  Set a-waving round his eyes.

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
  With a glitter toward the light,
  Purple violets, for the mouth,
  Breathing perfumes west and south,
And a sword of flashing lilies,
  Holden ready for the fight.

XI.

And a breastplate, made of daisies,
  Closely fitting, leaf by leaf;
  Periwinkles interlaced,
  Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
  Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
  If the disembodied soul
  Of old Hector, once of Troy,
  Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
  Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII.

Rolling this way, from Troy-ruin,
  In this body rude and rife,
  He might enter, and take rest
  'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
  His heroic heart to life.

XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started
  At a motion or a sound!
  Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
  With an *οτοτοτοτοι*?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
  Make the daisies tremble round?

XV.

It was hard to answer, often:
  But the birds sang in the tree—
  But the little birds sang bold,
  In the pear-tree green and old;
And my terror seemed to soften,
  Through the courage of their glee.

XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again!

XVII.

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming!—
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter,
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.



SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

I.

Sleep on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing,—
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in!
On your curls' full roundness, stand
Golden lights serenely—
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly.
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half shut,
Slants the shining azure;—
Open soul in noonday sun,
So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil, having done,
Nothing can encumber.

II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth,—
I will smile too! Patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.

Nay, keep sleeping, before loss;
I shall sleep though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows, who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure;—
Very soon, too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly!

Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping;
Differing in this, that I,
Sleeping, shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder!
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you I thus recall
From your sleep,—I solely,—
Me, from mine, an angel shall,
With reveillé holy!

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

They bid me sing to thee,
Thou golden-haired, and silver-voicèd child,
With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's, defiled;
With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight;
With feet all trembling at the new delight,
Treaders of earth to be!

II.

Ah no! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning cloud;
The merry river, from its lilies bowed;
The brisk rain, from the trees; the lucky wind,
That half doth make its music, half doth find:
But *I*—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
New comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
To bring a verse from out a human heart,
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary years,
Thy day-sum of delight?

IV.

E'en if the verse were said
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine!
But prayer in place of singing! prayer that would
Commend thee to the new creating God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart, without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
That gift of God be thine!

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
And pretty winning accents make thee now!
Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet!) of "father," "mother," shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ., AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,

TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
  He would tell you, with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker,
  I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
  At the hour of goblet pledge,
By Queen Juno brushed aside, a
  Full white arm sweep, from the edge.

II.

Sooth the drinking should be ampler,
  When the drink is so divine;
And some deep mouthed Greek exampler
  Would become your Cyprian wine!
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
  While his one eye over leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
  Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
  That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
  Each one pointing to his throat
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
  Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry,—"O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
  Springs to keep, of such a taste!"

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
  After gods and Greeks to drink;
And my lips are pale and earthy,
  To go bathing from this brink.

Since you heard them speak the last time,
  They have faded from their blooms;
And the laughter of my pastime
  Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
  Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
  In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
  Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
  May strike scarlet down the cheek?

VI.

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
  Suits no wreath again, indeed:
I am sad-voiced as the turtle,
  Which Anacreon used to feed:
Yet as that same bird demurely
  Wet her beak in cup of his,—
So, without a garland, surely
  I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go!—let others praise the Chian!—
  This is soft as Muses' string—
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
  This is rapid as its spring,—
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
  Light as ever trod her feet!
And the brown bees of Hymettus
  Make their honey, not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
  Though I sip it like a fly!—
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
  Change before me suddenly—

As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek
Past the pane, the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,—
Somewhat low for *ai*'s and *oi*'s

X

Then what golden hours were for us!—
While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air!
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled, like vapour over shrines!

XI

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarled oak beneath
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place—
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

XII

Our Euripides, the human—
With his droppings of warm tears;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres!

Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup bearers undying
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII

And my Plato, the divine one,—
If men know the gods aught
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak

XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him,
With his glorious mouth of gold,
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes

XV

And we both praised your Synesius,
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious,
As he whistled dogs and gods—
And we both praised Nazianzen,
For the fervid heart and speech,
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI

Do you mind that deed of Até,
Which you bound me to, so fast,—
Reading "De Virginitate"
From the first line to the last?

How I said at ending, solemn,
  As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
  Had had somewhat less to do?

XVII

For we sometimes gently wrangled;
  Very gently, be it said —
Since our thoughts were disentangled
  By no breaking of the thread!
And, I charged you with extortions
  On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
  Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest—a mystic moaning
  Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in—
  And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
  By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
  Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX

And Medea we saw, burning
  At her nature's planted stake;
And proud Œdipus, fate-scorning,
  While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
  Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower,
  When the poet called him BLIND!

XX.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
  And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow—the enfolder
  Of your quiet eyelids—ran

Both our spirits to one level;
  And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,—
  To your eyes that could not see.

XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
  Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
  Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
  All your kindness, friend of mine,—
When we two sate in the chamber,
  And the poets poured us wine?

XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking
  Of this Cyprus—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking
  Make a better œnomel.
And whoever be the speaker,
  None can murmur, with a sigh—
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
  I am sipping like a fly.



A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."
POEMS ON MAN, BY CORNELIUS MATTHEWS.*

I.

WE are born into life—it is sweet, it is strange!
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
          Which smiles with a change!
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces;
The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable, in thought and manner, for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.

And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found;—
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four—
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore.

II.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther:
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees.—
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical fine;
And the cedars are brushing the archangel's feet;
And time is eternity,—love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again:
And we breathe out, "O beauty,"—we cry out, "O truth,
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine;
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,—
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair, as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon; . . .
And we think him so near, he is this side the sun;
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures,
Which hideth the soul:

And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us, flies out with a wound,
And we shout so aloud, "We exult, we rejoice,"
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around,—
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice—
And we bind the rose garland on forehead and ears,
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks is not taken for tears
Help us, God, trust us, man, love us, woman! "I hold
Thy small head in my hands, —with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
I love thee, I leave thee,—
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,—
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God, slay me, man!—one is mourning for both!"
And we stand up, though young, near the funeral sheet
Which covers the Cæsar and old Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us, Life cools from its heat—
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—*art* thou sweet?

V.

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect—
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,—
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole,—
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
"Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.

"Speed me, God!—serve me, man!—I am god over men!
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again—
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!"—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VI.

Then we grow into thought,—and with inward ascensions,
Touch the bounds of our Being!
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides,
With its infinite tides,
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through all the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-tongue,
The sense of the mystical march.
And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer,—
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung."
And we smile in our thought, if they answer or no,—
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know!
Wonders breathe in our face,
And we ask not their name,
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts:
Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,
As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the Heavens and the earth, *can* a poet despond?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken;
And bringing our lives to the level of others,
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
"Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,—
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!"
From the fire and the water we drive out the steam,
With a rush and a roar, and the speed of a dream!
And the car without horses, the car without wings,
Roars onward and flies
On its pale iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes—
And the hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies—
And, lifting a fold of the smooth flowing Thames,
Draws under, the world, with its turmoils and pothers;
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
By Humanity's hum at the root of the springs!
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,
And teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
"God," "Liberty," "Truth,"—which they hearken and think,
And work into harmony, link upon link.
Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric respondence intense
On the dark of eclipse!
Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion,—the new generations that cry
In attune to our voice and harmonious reply,
"God," "Liberty," "Truth!"
We are glorious forsooth—
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII.

Help me, God—help me, man! I am low, I am weak—
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins;
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains,
From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organised clay.
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away!
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the Heaven heights of Truth!
Oh, the soul keeps its youth—
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,—
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal;
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold—
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
On, chariot—on, soul,—
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX.

Love us, God; love us, man! we believe, we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond—
We are glorious—and DIE!
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

——o——

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

——"discordance that can accord"
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate,
On a tall bough and straight!
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness

"For if I wait," said she,
"Till times for roses be,
For the musk rose and the moss rose,
Royal red and maiden blush rose,—

"What glory then for me
In such a company? —
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty?

"Nay, let me in," said she,
"Before the rest are free, —
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness

"For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,—
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision

"Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine
What addressing, what caressing!
And what thank, and praise, and blessing!

"A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction

"Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

"And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory

"Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,—
Never waiting for the suntide

"Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide

"I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me,
With my starry aspect dreamy!

"And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling"

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green;
Scarcely having, scarcely having,
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

"For the nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the happy islands,
Learning music from the silence

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour,
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down,
As on a royal crown ,
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure

Whereat the Earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter frozen, winter frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose "Ha, Snow !
And art thou fallen so ?
Thou, who wert enthroned stately
All along my mountains, lately ?

"Holla, thou world-wide snow !
And art thou wasted so
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee ?"

—Poor Rose, to be misknown !
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness, -
All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say—
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway !
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy.

Said, "Verily and thus
It chanceth eke with *us*
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the watches—

"Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

"Holy in voice and heart,—
To high ends set apart !
All unmated, all unmated,
Because so consecrated.

"But if alone we be,
Where is our empery ?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can praise our lofty nature ?

"What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone ?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

"What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost dim ?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

"And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

"Drop, leaf—be silent, song—
Cold things we come among :
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

"Howbeit" (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

"Something it is to hold,
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

"Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

"Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

"Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, nathless
Blessed still, and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created

"Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi*.

"Shame, shame to poet's soul,
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

"Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass, unchallenged by you!

"Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

"In prayers — that upward mount
Like to a fair sunned fount,
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission—
With an unfulfilled fruition!

"In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends;
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly!

"In thanks—for all the good,
By poets understood—
For the sounds of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away,
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in heaven,—

"For life, so lovely-vain,—
For death which breaks the chain,—
For the sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness!"

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!"

II

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting;
"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?"
"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun"

III.

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there—
The bird flew to his grave and died, amid a thousand wails;—
And, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's



THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

I.

"There is no God," the foolish saith,—
But none, "There is no sorrow,"
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised,
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
Who ne'er said, "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God!

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming,
The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
As help were in the human
Yet, while the cloud wheels roll and grind,
We spirits tremble under!—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder
Be pitiful, O God!

III

The battle hurtles on the plains—
Earth feels new scythes upon her,
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest . . . honour,-

Draw face to face, front line to line,
  One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
  Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
                Be pitiful, O God!

IV.

The plague runs festering through the town,—
  And never a bell is tolling;
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
  Nod to the dead cart's rolling·
The young child calleth for the cup—
  The strong man brings it weeping
The mother from her babe looks up,
  And shrieks away its sleeping.
                Be pitiful, O God

V

The plague of gold strikes far and near,—
  And deep and strong it enters:
This purple chimar which we wear,
  Makes madder than the centaur's
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange
  We cheer the pale gold-diggers –
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
  And marked, like sheep, with figures
                Be pitiful, O God!

VI

The curse of gold, upon the land,
  The lack of bread enforces—
The rail cars snort from strand to strand,
  Like more of Death's White horses!
The rich preach "rights" and future days,
  And hear no angel scoffing:
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
  On corn-ships in the offing.
                Be pitiful, O God!

VII.

We meet together at the feast!—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us!
We name delight, and pledge it round—
"It shall be ours to-morrow!"
God's seraphs! do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God!

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The stedfast skies, above us
We look into each other's eyes,—
"And how long will you love us?"—
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless—
"Till death us part!"—O words, to be
Our *best* for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, O God!

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, "Be stronger hearted!"
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!—
To see a light on dearest brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

X.

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces:
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places?—

We cannot speak :—we see anew
  The hills we used to live in;
And feel our mother's smile press through
  The kisses she is giving.
                    Be pitiful, O God!

XI.

We pray together at the kirk,
  For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
  We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee—
  Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
  Without the rest or glory!
                    Be pitiful, O God!

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
  The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
  With endless generations.
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
  In silence lift their mirrors;
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
  Recoil from their own terrors.
                    Be pitiful, O God!

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
  Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
The sun strikes, through the farthest mist,
  The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
  When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass,
  We look upon the longest.
                    Be pitiful, O God!

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
  Men whisper, "He is dying:"
We cry no more, "Be pitiful!"—
  We have no strength for crying.
No strength, no need! Then, Soul of mine,
  Look up and triumph rather—
Lo! in the depth of God's Divine,
  The Son adjures the Father—
      BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

——o——

A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
  Ten times have the lilies blown,
  Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily clear—
  Lily shaped, and drooped in duty
  To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks, encoloured faintly,
  Which a trail of golden hair
  Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
  Which two blue eyes undershine,
  Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
  Though too calm, you think, and tender,
  For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
  Frank, obedient,—waiting still
  On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things—
  As young birds, or early wheat
  When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
  Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
  Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
  Which come softly—just as *she*,
  When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
  In a bower of gentle looks,—
  Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
  As a silver stream may run,
  Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
  As if drawn from thoughts more far
  Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
  He would sing of her with falls
  Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
  He would paint her unaware
  With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—"You have done a
Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger—when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,—
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her!"—
Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTH.

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her!
God and she and I only, . . . there, I sate down to draw her
Soul, through the clefts of confession. . . . Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do it at the last.
"My cup is blood-red
With my sin," she said,
"And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these!"

II.

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy soul as a spark,
Into the organised glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour the power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little ground-worm?
"I have sinned," she said,
"For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from His first decrees!
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth the worm:
I am viler than these!"

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee straight,
With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light found inadequate,
When He only sent thee the north-winds, a little searching and chill,
To quicken thy flame . . . didst thou kindle and flash to the heights of His will?
"I have sinned," she said,
"Unquickened, unspread,
My fire dropt down and I wept on my knees!
I only said of His winds of the north, as I shrank from their chill, . . .
What delight is in these?"

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it like a star?
"I have sinned,' she said,
"And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!
The mine cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth the star —
I am viler than these!"

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . unthankful and impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God, through the rents in thy nature!
If He, the all giving and loving, is served so, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the changing, . . . thy fellows of men?
"I have *loved*," she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind bows the wet acacia-trees).
"I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . . I sate among men,
And I have loved these."

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, . . . like a trumpet that takes
The low note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it, solemn and clear . . . "I have sinned not in
this!
Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have loved not
amiss.
Let the living," she said,
"Enquire of the dead,
In the house of the pale fronted Images,—
And my own true Dead will answer for me, that I have not loved
amiss,
In my love for all these.

VII.

"The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep day and
night:
Their least step on the stair still throbs through me, if ever so
light:
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, in long ago
years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and gazed at through tears.
Dig the snow," she said,
"For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If but one of these love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these!

VIII.

"If I angered any among them, my own life was sore;
If I fell from their presence, I clung to their memory more:
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called
sweet;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight at
their feet.
I have loved," she said,—
"Man is weak, God is dread;
Yet the weakest man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such love-oil on the Saviour's feet,
As I lavished for these."

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee, their wild-berry wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same?
But she wept and said,
"God, over my head,
Will sweep in the wrath of His judgment seas,
If He deal with me sinning, but only the same,
And not gentler than these!"



LOVED ONCE

I

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds, the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
Than these words—"I loved ONCE."

II

And who saith, "I loved ONCE?"
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love, foresee,
Love through eternity,
And, by To Love, do apprehend To Be
Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown name,—casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

III

Nor ever the "Loved ONCE,"
Dost THOU say, Victim Christ, misprized friend!
The cross and curse may rend,
But, having loved, Thou lovest to the end!

This is man's saying—man's. Too weak to move
One sphered star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
With his No More, and Once.

IV

How say ye, "We loved once,"
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each other so?
And could ye say of some, whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone,
Such words, "We loved them ONCE?"

V.

Could ye, "We loved her once,'
Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words--Ye loved me ONCE!

VI.

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
Say cold of me, when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay?
When mute the lips which deprecate to day?—
Not so! not then—*least* then! When Life is shriven,
And Death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
Say not, "We loved them once"

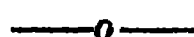
VII

Say never, ye loved ONCE!
God is too near above, the grave, below,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying so.

The mysteries of Life and Death avenge
  Affections light of range—
There comes no change to justify that change,
  Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

VIII

  And yet that word of ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
  Shaking a discrowned head,
"We ruled once,"—dotards, "We once taught and led,"—
Cripples once danced i' the vines,—and bards approved,
  Were once by scornings moved:
But love strikes one hour—LOVE! Those *never* loved,
  Who dream that they loved ONCE.



THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

I WOULD build a cloudy House
  For my thoughts to live in;
When for earth too fancy-loose
  And too low for Heaven!
Hush! I talk my dream aloud—
  I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud,
  To which I looked with *thee*.

II

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
  Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
  From a sunset solemn!
May mists, for the casements, fetch,
  Pale and glimmering;
With a sunbeam hid in each,
  And a smell of spring.

III

Build the entrance high and proud,
  Darkening and then brightening,—
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
  Veined by the lightning.
Use one with an iris-stain
  For the door within;
Turning to a sound like rain
  As I enter in.

IV

Build a spacious hall thereby
  Boldly, never fearing.
Use the blue place of the sky,
  Which the wind is clearing;
Branched with corridors sublime,
  Flecked with winding stairs—
Such as children wish to climb,
  Following their own prayers.

V

In the mutest of the house,
  I will have my chamber:
Silence at the door shall use
  Evening's light of amber,
Solemnising every mood,
  Softening in degree,—
Turning sadness into good,
  As I turn the key.

VI

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here,
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,—
Drawing colours, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch

VII

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet wove around,—
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound

VIII.

Bring the fantasque cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged, for sculptures, round the room,-
Named as Fancy weeneth
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources,
Some be birds of paradise,—
Some, Olympian horses

IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in;
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

X.

Bring a grey cloud from the east,
Where the lark is singing;
Something of the song at least,
Unlost in the bringing
That shall be a morning chair,
Poet dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
While he sinketh, catch it
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest Thought,
At the curfew sounding,—
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh!
Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather!
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see—
Gone— except that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with *thee!*

XIII.

Let them! Wipe such visionings
From the Fancy's cartel—
Love secures some fairer things
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken,—heaven be bowed—
But still, unchanged shall be,—
Here in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with THEE!

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face .
  To meet the darkness on the deep,
    The solemn ship went onward
I bowed down weary in the place,
  For parting tears and present sleep
    Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep, which shut all dreams from me,
  And kept my inner self apart,
    And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
  Made conscious of a human heart
    Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
  The waters round me, turbulent,
    The skies, impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
  As glorified by even the intent
    Of holding the day-glory!

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
  The meeting line of sea and sky,
    With aspect still and mystic.
I think they did foresee the sun,
  And rested on their prophecy
    In quietude majestic;

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
  Like statues by the open tomb
    Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun!—he came up to be viewed;
  And sky and sea made mighty room
    To inaugurate the vision!

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
As red wine, through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning;
But here, no earth profaned the sun!
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with joys fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded if self-doubted.
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves:
I would not praise the pageant high,
And miss the dedicature:
I, drawn down toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature?

IX.

I could not bear to sit alone
In nature's fixed benignities,
While my warm pulse was moving.
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving.

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And call them dear and dearer;
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech
As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

'Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day.
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in your soul,
Because your voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stoled minister,
And chanting congregation,
God's Spirit shall give comfort. He
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

XIII.

He shall assist me to look higher,
Where keep the saints, with harp and song,
An endless sabbath morning,
And, on that sea commixed with fire,
Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.



A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty;
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt, by gazing on the sun,
To counterfeit his shining;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won anew
A glory . . . in declining.

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal.
And cactuses, a queen might don,
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

V.

Pansies for ladies all! I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror:
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter,—
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing;
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there, may have
A type that seemeth worthy
Of a fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made,—renewing.

X.

No flowers our gardened England hath,
To match with these in bloom and breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills;
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding.

XI.

By Loddon's streams the flowers are fair,
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding;
For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden.

XII.

But here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine;
And every Wind with stolèd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine.

XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses, that
No harm shall touch his daughter)
Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

XIV.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do,
But make the leaves more brightly shew
In posies newly gathered?—
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
A little flower half-withered.

XV.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened!

XVI.

A chamber window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden pot,
Among the city shadows:
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

XVII.

How coldly, on its head, did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall,
In pale refraction driven!
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves,
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of Heaven!

XVIII.

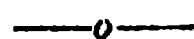
And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea,
And garden blooms, to look on.

XIX.

But she, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh! if her face she turned then, ...
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon!

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flowers which grew beneath your eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing!



THE MASK.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head,
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And wrong did teach this jesting bold,
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled,—
And what now will you say?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Are captives so uncomforted,
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness, dying suns diffuse!
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

VI

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
Who do not therefore grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear,
And bought with pangs long nourished,
And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

Ye weep for those who weep?—she said—
Ah, fools!—I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled,
What time their eyes were dry!
Whom sadder can I say?—she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART

I

Free Heart, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer, thine own, will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,—
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Free hearts are better so."

II

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold!

World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
"Come hither, come hither and be our guest."
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Good hearts are calmer so."

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife:
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine,
Her blood-red plans of life:
World's Gain, with a brow knit down:
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown—
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Calm hearts are wiser so."

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her feet,
To think how the sun shone yesterday?
With her ankles sunken in asphodel,
She wept for the roses of earth, which fell
From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Wise hearts are warmer so."

V.

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene?—
"'Tis a fair still house well kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,
And holy prayers made clean.
There, I sit with Love in the sun,
And we two never have done
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*."

Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Warm hearts are fuller so"

VI.

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?
—"But this true Love of mine
Clings fast as the clinging vine,
And mingles pure as the grapes in wine"
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"No, no!
Full hearts beat higher so"

VII

O Heart, O Love, beware!
Look up, and boast not there
For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the world, between Death and Sin,—
The world, and the world's Despair!
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place
Heart, wilt thou go?
"Still, no!
High hearts must grieve even so"

VIII.

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickt through to the song:
If summer doeth no wrong,
The winter will, they say.
Sing, Heart! what Heart replies?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"Ah, no!
Grieved hearts must break even so."

IX.

Howbeit all is not lost:
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells, die off from us
On the desert hills cloud crossed!
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And "Come up hither," recover all
Heart, wilt thou go?
—"I go!
Broken hearts triumph so"



WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wings, to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die;

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer hath a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey gold I see
Could delve from roses easily;

IV

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud;

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
Which the next storm may trample down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed;

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
Whose song 's at shut up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long deferred;

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade,
As thus, methought, an angel said:

XII.

"If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others; and most strong
In seeing right, while doing wrong;

XIII.

"I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use:

XIV.

"I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*, half way 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above, and judge within:

XV.

I would not let my pulse beat high
As *thou*, toward fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy

XVI.

"I would not damp the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God's freedom, using it

XVII.

"I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*, but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!"



MEMORY AND HOPE

I.

Back-looking Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground:
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword
Fell sad, in Eden sward;
And one, from Eden earth, within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was said—
"Thy seed shall bruise his head."

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere
When she was born. Her deep eyes shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by year:
With odorous gums, she mixeth things defiled,
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet,
With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round;
She droppeth tears with seed, where man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours;
She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go
A mood of deeper woe!

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not fade,
And went a nodding through the wilderness,
With brow that shone no less
Than sea bird wings, by storm more frequent made,—
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light;
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold,
By slippers all of gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away:
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
The while her feet were bleeding;
Till Memory met her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wert standing near,
O Thou, who saidest "live" to creatures lying
In their own blood, and dying!
For Thou her forehead to Thine heart didst rear,
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swound, and gazed upon Thy face;
And, meeting there that soft subduing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
To "reach the things before."

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel wings thrill quick like summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never
From Love and Faith may sever,
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening,
A time ago, though whitening all the while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked
To Adam as he walked.



HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest;
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Enquiring wherefore we were born
For earnest, or for jest?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
  About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
  Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
  Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat!
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
  Expands from world to world.

And, in the tumult and excess
  Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
  Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps His holy mysteries
  Just on the outside of man's dream!
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
  Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
  Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
  Beyond our peace and passions?

VII

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, "Who passes?" they are dumb:
We cannot see them go or come
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown,-
Our daily joy and pain advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love, O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

IX

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood,
To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us, for defence,
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God,
Stand hidden in their wings

X

And, sometimes, through Life's heavy swound,
We grope for them! with strangled breath
We stretch our hands abroad, and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life wound,
Which soon is large enough for death

— o —

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I

They say that God lives very high!
But if you look above the pines,
You cannot see our God: And why?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines,
  You never see Him in the gold,
Though from Him all that's glory shines.

III

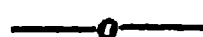
God is so good, He wears a fold
  Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold

IV

But still I feel that His embrace
  Slides down, by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.

V

As if my tender mother laid
  On my shut lids, her kisses' pressure,
Half waking me at night, and said,
  "Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"



THE CLAIM

I.

Grief sate upon a rock and sighed one day:
    (Sighing is all her rest)
"Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway!"
As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast . . .
"Ah, wellaway! . . ah me! alas, ah me!"
    Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
    That falls on water, "Lo,
The Winds have wandered from me! I remain
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue,
    Till wanted for more dew.

III.

"'The Sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
Whereby, constrained and pale,
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail!
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind,—

IV

"And let it carry me adown the west!'"
But Love, who, prostrated,
Lay at Grief's foot, . . . his lifted eyes possessed
Of her full image, . . . answered in her stead
"Now nay, now nay! she shall not give away
What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth
Where Grief makes moan,
Love claims his own!
And therefore do I lie here night and day,
And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth"

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.

Fast this Life of mine was dying,
Blind already and calm as death;
Snowflakes on her bosom lying,
Scarcely heaving with the breath.

II.

Love came by, and, having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III.

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips, . .
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips

IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
 Evermore . . . but only LOVE?



INCLUSIONS.

I.

OH, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine!
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . . . unfit to plight with thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, . . . lest it should wet thine own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand, . . . the part is in the whole! . . .
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined to soul.



INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no one above thee;
 Thou standest alone, as the nightingale sings!
 Yet my words that would praise thee, are impotent things,
For none can express thee, though all should approve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee? . . . weary thee . . . grieve thee?
 Lean on thy shoulder . . . new burdens to add? . . .
 Weep my tears over thee . . . making thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me retrieve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE! who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet:
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—thy titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now,—unsweetened would forego thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn,
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now,—with not a hue would light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined, because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now,— would darken where it met thee.

V.

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet,
Along thy leaf's pure edges, after heat,—
If lighting now,—would coldly overrun thee.

VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now,—would blindly overlook thee.

VII.

The heart doth recognise thee,
Alone, alone! The heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,—
Though seeing now those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose! than to such roses bold
As Julia wears at dances, smiling cold!—
Lie still upon this heart—which breaks below thee!

—o—

THE EXILE'S RETURN

I

WHEN from thee, weeping, I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved
With those same parting tears,
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee

II

I clasped thine hand, when standing last
Upon the shore in sight
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to night!
I shall be there—no longer *we*—
No more with thee

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so,
How change could touch the falsehood-free
And changeless *thee!*

IV.

But now thy tender looks last-seen
Within my soul remain,
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,
To be no more again –
That I shall vainly wait – ah me!
A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay,
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
Ætherial brow decay;
Where all thy mortal I might see,
But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone,
Whose parting pain is o'er.
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly,
For *me*, not *thee*.

VII.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain!
For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures show,
Can never grieve again—
And grief, thou knewest mine, would be
Still shared by thee!

THE SLEEP.

"He giveth His beloved sleep."—PSALM cxxvii. 2.

I.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"?

II.

What would we give to our beloved?—
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the brows.—
"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

III.

What do we give to our beloved?—
A little faith, all undisproved,
A little dust, to overweep,
And bitter memories, to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake.—
"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

IV.

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber, when
"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvèd gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God makes a silence through you all,
And "giveth His beloved, sleep."

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
"He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VII.

Yea, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man,
Confirmed, in such a rest to keep;
But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the jugglers leap,—
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on *His* love repose,
Who "giveth His beloved, sleep!"

IX

And, friends, dear friends,—when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one, most loving of you all,
Say, "Not a tear must o'er her fall—
He giveth His beloved, sleep."

A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE.*

HYMN I.

"The Lord Jesus, although gone to the Father, and we see Him no more, is still present with His Church; and in His heavenly glory expends upon her as intense a love, as in the agony of the garden and the crucifixion of the tree. Those eyes that wept, still gaze upon her." —*Recalled words of an extempore Discourse, preached at Sidmouth*, 1833.

God, namèd Love, whose fount Thou art,
  Thy crownless Church before Thee stands,
With too much hating in her heart,
  And too much striving in her hands!

O loving Lord! O slain for love!
  Thy blood upon Thy garments came—
Inwrap their folds our brows above,
  Before we tell Thee all our shame!

"Love as I loved you," was the sound
  That on Thy lips expiring sate!
Sweet words, in bitter strivings drowned!
  We hated as the worldly hate.

The spear that pierced for love Thy side,
  We dared for wrathful use to crave;
And with our cruel noise denied
  Its silence to Thy blood-red grave!

Ah, blood! that speaketh more of love
  Than Abel's—could we speak like Cain,
And grieve and scare that holy Dove,
  The parting love gift of the Slain?

Yet, Lord, Thy wrongèd love fulfil!
  Thy Church, though fallen, before Thee stands—
Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,
  Albeit the hands are Esau's hands!

Hast Thou no tears, like those besprent
  Upon Thy Zion's ancient part?

* The poems marked with an asterisk * were omitted by Mrs. Browning in her 1856 edition. They are now restored.

No moving looks, like those which sent
  Their softness through a traitor's heart?

No touching tale of anguish dear;
  Whereby like children we may creep,
All trembling, to each other near,
  And view each other's face, and weep?

Oh, move us--THOU hast power to move—
  One in the one Beloved to be!
Teach us the heights and depths of love—
  Give THINE—that we may love like THEE!



THE MEDIATOR.*

HYMN II.

"As the greatest of all sacrifices was required, we may be assured that no other would have sufficed." —BOYD's *Essay on the Atonement.*

How high Thou art! our songs can own
  No music Thou couldst stoop to hear!
But still the Son's expiring groan
  Is vocal in the Father's ear.

How pure Thou art! our hands are dyed
  With curses, red with murder's hue—
But HE hath stretched HIS hands to hide
  The sins that pierced them from Thy view.

How strong Thou art! we tremble lest
  The thunders of Thine arm be moved—
But HE is lying on Thy breast,
  And Thou must clasp Thy best Beloved!

How kind Thou art! Thou didst not choose
  To joy in Him for ever so;
But that embrace Thou wilt not loose
  For vengeance, didst for love forego!

High God, and pure, and strong, and kind!
  The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!
Thy brightness in His face we find—
  Behold our darkness only *there!*

THE WEEPING SAVIOUR.*

HYMN III.

——"tell
Whether His countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light."
DONNE.

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be,
  Still Jesus' heart its friendship kept—
"Where have ye laid him?"—"Come and see!"
  But ere His eyes could see, they wept.

Lord! not in sepulchres alone,
  Corruption's worm is rank and free;
The shroud of death our bosoms own—
  The shades of sorrow! Come and see!

Come, Lord! God's image cannot shine
  Where sin's funereal darkness lowers—
Come! turn those weeping eyes of Thine
  Upon these sinning souls of ours!

And let those eyes, with shepherd care,
  Their moving watch above us keep,
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,
  And as Thou weepedst, *we* may weep!

For surely we may weep to know,
  So dark and deep our spirit's stain;
That had Thy blood refused to flow,
  Thy very tears had flowed in vain.

THE MEASURE.

HYMN IV.

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שלִישׁ)."—ISAIAH xl.
"Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שלִישׁ)."—PSALM lxxx.*

I.

GOD, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man, in one
Measure and by one weight ;—
So saith His holy book.

II

Shall *we*, then, who have issued from the dust
And there returned ; shall *we*, who toil for dust,
And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
Say, "No more tears, Lord God !
The measure runneth o'er" ?

III.

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest Thou ?
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust, and turns
On Thee pathetic eyes,
Still moistened with our tears !

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we weep,
To look in patience upon earth and learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
Those tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

* I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish!
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave
anguish.

II.

O poets! from a maniac's tongue was poured the death
singing!
O Christians! at your cross of hope a hopeless hand
clinging!
O men! this man, in brotherhood, your weary paths beguilin
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye w
smiling!

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears
story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory;
And how, when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lig
departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted;

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration:
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken;
Named softly, as the household name of one whom God h
taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom, I learn to think upon him,
With meekness, that is gratefulness to God whose heaven h
won him—
Who suffered once the madness-cloud, to His own love to bl
him;
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird cc
find him:

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses,
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences!
The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept his within its number;
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

VIII.

But while in blindness he remained unconscious of the guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, though frenzy desolated—
Nor man, nor nature satisfy, whom only God created!

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother, while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses;
That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother! where's my mother?"—
As if such tender words and looks could come from any other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er him;
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love she bore him!—
Thus woke the poet from the dream, his life's long fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in death, to save him!

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth could image that awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted;
But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew "*My* Saviour! *not* deserted!"

XII.

Deserted! who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted,
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather:
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father;
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry, His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation;
That earth's worst frenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture, in a vision!

—o—

SOUNDS.

Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας;——
ÆSCHYLUS.

I.

HEARKEN, hearken!
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean;
Teaching his solemnity,
Sounds of inland life and glee,
Learnt beside the waving tree,
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion

Which rather glads than grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learnt among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees, whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—
Learnt among the grasses green,
Where the rustling mice are seen,
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun;
And lazy sheep are browsing through,
With their noses trailed in dew;
And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suiteth earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky:
While the woodland doves, apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a sighing in a dream.*
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone,
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
  In the ocean's ear.
Ay! and ocean seems to hear,

* "While floating up bright forms ideal,
  Mistress, or friend, around me stream,
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
  Like music mingling with a dream."
John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own "dream," and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas, however, being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many.

With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

Hearken, hearken!
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride,
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head,
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear, at the self-same time,
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in the summer air,—
Save when he droppeth his voice adown,
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear.
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found;
And an old man groans—with his testament
Only half signed—for the life that's spent;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye!"
And foemen twain, while Earth, their mother,
Looks greenly upward, curse each other;
A schoolboy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks:
A lonely student cries aloud,
Eureka! clasping at his shroud,
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone;

A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale;
A muttering gamester shakes the dice:
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies;
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them,
A patriot leaving his native land to them,
Invokes the world against perjured state;
A priest disserts upon linen skirts;
A sinner screams for one hope more,
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enow, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound

III.

Hearken, hearken!
God speaketh to thy soul;
Using the supreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one;
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John,
For whom did backward roll
The cloud gate of the future, turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now—
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation,
Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
The memory of a solemn vow,
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Hearken, hearken!
God speaketh in thy soul;
Saying, "O thou, that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,

To break beside the fount thy golden bowl,
And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven, and see how like a scroll '
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping! Thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars, and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love!—give love to *Me!*
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin! sit still beneath My rood,
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,
And seek none other sound!

V.

Hearken, hearken!
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing, ever,
And not the voice of God?



THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

Which is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?
The sun, a little cloud can pall
With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
My lips asunder—
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined,
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind,
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
To glory breakest, –
The Strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

—o—

THE PET NAME.

———" the name
Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress."
MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes.*

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm,
The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did to pages wove
For gay romance belong,
It never dedicate did move,
As "Sacharissa," unto love
"Orinda," unto song

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none;
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win.
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain;
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof! The mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear!
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee;—

XI.

And voices, which to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keeping!—
To some, I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
In heaven, these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears;
No murmurs cross my mind:
Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind!

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
With love which softens yet!
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender, it hath caught
Earth's guerdon of regret!

XIV.

The earth may sadden, not remove,
Our love divinely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And lead us nearer Heaven.



THE MOURNING MOTHER.

(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

I.

DOST thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other
Sweet counsel ye can have?—
That *he*, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still ofter,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him, when living,
Thou wert both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone!
Sustain that exultation,
Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion
Thy Blessed in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew,
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two,
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to Light and God!
For the first face beholding,
The Christ's in its divine —
For the first place the golden
And tideless hyaline;
With trees, at lasting summer,
That rock to songful sound,
While angels, the new comer,
Wrap a still smile around.

Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,—
Spreading a thicker palm bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes,—
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song,
Which in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long,—
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,—
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother,
Thy blind boy walks in light!
Ye wait for one another
Before God's infinite!
But *thou* art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below —
Thou the sole blind, — thou markest,
Content that it be so —
Until ye two have meeting
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his*.
Wait on, thou mourning mother.

— o —

A VALEDICTION.

I.

God be with thee, my beloved, — God be with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,—
Moor and pleasance, all around thee and beneath thee,
Looking equal in one snow!
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas! I can but teach thee—
God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee!

II.

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—Can I teach thee?
If I said, Go left or right,
The counsel would be light,—
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee.
My right would show like left;
My raising would depress thee,—
My choice of light would blind thee,—
Of way, would leave behind thee—
Of end, would leave bereft.
Alas! I can but bless thee—
May GOD teach thee, my beloved,—may GOD teach thee!

III

Can I bless thee, my beloved.—Can I bless thee?
What blessing word can I
From mine own tears keep dry?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?
My good reverts to ill;
My calmnesses would move thee,—
My softnesses would prick thee,—
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas! I can but love thee—
May GOD bless thee, my beloved,—may GOD bless thee!

IV.

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
My love kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it:
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,—
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die!
May GOD love thee, my beloved,—may GOD love thee!

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

'To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.'
LOWELL.

I

Mountain gorses, ever golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden,
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?

II

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms!
Do ye teach us to be glad,
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth, that Beauty liveth still!

III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world! they are not tears, but dew

THE LADY'S YES.

"Yes," I answered you last night;
  "No," this morning, sir, I say.
Colours seen by candle-light,
  Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
  Lamps above, and laughs be-
  low—
Love me sounded like a jest,
  Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No.*

Call me false, or call me free—
  Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on your face shall see
  Any grief for change on mine

Yet the sin is on us both—
  Time to dance is not to woo—
Wooer light makes fickle troth—
  Scorn of *me* recoils on *you.*

Learn to win a lady's faith
  Nobly, as the thing is high;
Bravely, as for life and death—
  With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
  Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
  Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true—
  Ever true, as wives of yore—
And her *Yes*, once said to you,
  SHALL be Yes for evermore.



A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

I.

She has laughed as softly as if she sighed;
  She has counted six and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
  Oh, each a worthy lover!
They "give her time;" for her soul must slip
  Where the world has set the grooving:
She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
  But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
  As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
  From her eyelids rising and falling.
—Speaks common words with a blushful air;
  —Hears bold words, unreproving:
But her silence says—what she never will swear-
  And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady! lean to the night-guitar,
  And drop a smile to the bringer;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
  At the voice of an in-door singer!
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes,
  Glance lightly, on their removing,
And join new vows to old perjuries—
  But dare not call it loving!

IV.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
  No other is soft in the rhythm,
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
  That all men beside go with him,
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
  That your beauty itself wants proving,
Unless you can swear—"For life, for death!"—
  Oh, fear to call it loving!

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
  On the absent face that fixed you,
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
  With the breadth of heaven betwixt you,
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
  Through behoving and unbehoving,
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
  Oh, never call it loving!



A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
  Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
  Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thy open youth
  In its frank surrender;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
  With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
  Made for earnest granting!
Taking colour from the skies,
  Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
  Snow-like at first meeting
Love me with thine heart, that all
  The neighbours then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
  Freely—open-minded.
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
  Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
  Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns
  When I murmur "*Love me!*"

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul—
  Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
  On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
  When the world has crowned thee!
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
  With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
  Up the woodlands shady:
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
  As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
  Further off or higher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
  And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
  Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
  As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

He listened at the porch that day
  To hear the wheel go on, and on,
And then it stopped—ran back away—
  While through the door he brought the sun:
  But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
  That love ne'er ended, once begun;
I smiled—believing for us both,
  What was the truth for only one:
  And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,
For I have, since, a harder known!
And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to my ear would drown:
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence*, made me groan!
And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
Who cursed me on her death bed lone,
And my dead baby's—(God it save!)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan
And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone!
Sweet neighbours! whisper low instead:
"This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done."

VII

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon;
And leave the wheel out very plain,
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May *see* the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

Five months ago, the stream did flow,
  The lilies bloomed along the edge;
And we were lingering to and fro,—
Where none will track thee in this snow,
  Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go!
  For if I do not hear thy foot,
  The frozen river is as mute,—
  The flowers have dried down to the root;
  And why, since these be changed since May,
    Shouldst *thou* change less than *they*?

II.

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
  The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
Set blushing at thy praises so,
  Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go!
  For if my face is turned to pale,
  It was thine oath that first did fail,—
  It was thy love proved false and frail!
  And why, since these be changed, enow,
    Should *I* change less than *thou*?



THAT DAY.

I.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
    One forlorn since that day.

II.

The flowers of the margin are many to see,
For none stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me;
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,
For my low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did that day!

III.

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow breaker, be thou!
I leave the flower growing—the bird, unreproved;—
Would I trouble *thee*, rather than *them*, my beloved,
And my lover that day?

IV

Go! be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they win thee from Heaven;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!



A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed:
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound!
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that, in re-echoing,
Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore:
Yet if a little maid, or child,
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
This reed will answer evermore.

III

I am no trumpet, but a reed:
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,—
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands—if they should fall:
Then let them leave me in the sedge.

——o——

THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands*, and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.—E. B. B.

I

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead!

II

In what revel are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,—
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

IV

Or he crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V.

"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay,—
Since Pan is dead?

VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenchèd locks dry
slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye
For Pan is dead

VII

From the gloaming of the oak
wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke,
would
No sob tremble through the tree?
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye
For Pan is dead

VIII

Have ye left the mountain places
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist
Not a sound the silence thrills,
Of the everlasting hills
Pan Pan is dead

IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities –
Now Pan is dead

X

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail
While in idiocy of godhead,
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair, all mist-like where he stands;
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,—
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own
vines!
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,—
"Evohe—ah—evohe—!"
Ah, Pan is dead.

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone:
And old Pluto, deaf and silent,
Is cast out into the sun
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
"We *all* now are desolate—"
Now Pan is dead.

XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snowstorm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove glories?
Nay! Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
"Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead!"

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your wages
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,—
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilèd Dark behind:
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
"Pan, Pan is dead."

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place:
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
And sank slowly through the air;
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

XXVII.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross—
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss,
When His priestly blood dropped downward,
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete:
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat—
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine.
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look!
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook—
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
See! the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must!
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades, call you back,—
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth:
And those debonaire romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies

Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries:
And a Priest's Hand through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration
And Pan is dead.

XXXVI.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
Can we sigh right for a wrong?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame! to stand in His creation
And doubt Truth's sufficiency!—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,—
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses—
Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
Look up Godward! speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul!
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
Pan, Pan is dead.



A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN JULY, 1848. DIED NOVEMBER, 1849.

I.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

II.

And here, among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, Lily, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her:
She looked such kinship to the flowers . . .
Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white . . .
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence

VII.

We could not wish her whiter, . . Her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house!—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII.

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming;
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

IX.

. . . Said "Father," "Mother"!—then, left off:
For tongues celestial, fitter.
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them:
"Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them."

XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her;
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread her.

XII.

We should bring pansies, quick with spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts . . .
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, "The angels have thee, Sweet,
Because we are not worthy."

XV.

But winter kills the orange-buds,—
The gardens in the frost are;
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her!

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart!—too weak too weak,
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak,
When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us, that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel Thy Heaven too distant!

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture;

XIX.

To us, us also—open straight!
The outer life is chilly—
Are *we*, too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,—
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close, with stronger pressure!

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands . . .
At every word, beats fuller . . .
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour!

XXII.

—But God gives patience. Love learns strength,
And Faith remembers promise;
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
Through struggle, made more glorious:
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
With spirit unbereaven—
"God will not all take back His gifts:
My Lily's mine in Heaven!

XXV.

"Still mine! — maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI.

"Meanwhile," the mother cries, "content!
Our love was well divided;
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did

XXVII.

"Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness!
To us, the empty room and cot—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

XXVIII.

"To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in:
To us, the silence in the house—
To her, the choral singing!

XXIX.

"For her, to gladden in God's view—
For us, to hope and bear on!—
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon.

XXX.

"Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses!

XXXI.

"While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling;
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in;

XXXII.

"Child, father, mother—who, left out?
Not mother, and not father!—
And when, their dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII.

"Some smiling angel close shall stand,
In old Correggio's fashion,
Bearing a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION."

——o——

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

I.

ON the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near me,—and not *you!*
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours,—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
"Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!"

III.

But all changeth. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper,
"Love, I love you," as before,—
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest, ever seen?

IV.

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

V

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew!
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen,—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

VI.

But, ah me! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan,—
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love, to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it!
Come, of latest love, to glean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen"?

IX.

No reply! The fountain's warble
In the court-yard sounds alone,
As the water to the marble,
So my heart falls with a moan,
From love-sighing
To this dying!
Death forerunneth Love, to win
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

X.

Will you come? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid —
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry beneath the cypress green—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there,—that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
"Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

XIII.

When the palace ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
"Poet, sing those verses, written
For the lady who is dead,"—
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen"?

XIV.

"Sweetest eyes!" How sweet in flowings
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise, intervene—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,—
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn high than these!
Miserere
For the weary—
Oh, no longer for Catrine,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XVI.

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
I have loosed it from my hair;*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly,
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

XVII.

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast;
You may cast away, Beloved,
In your future, all my past;
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss,
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS?
Death hath boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

XIX.

I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine!
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

——o——

THE YOUNG QUEEN.*

"This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it."

The Queen's Declaration in Council.

The shroud is yet unspread
To wrap our crownèd dead;
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for the thrilling word of doom;
And Death, that makes serene
Ev'n brows where crowns have been,
Hath scarcely time to meeten his for silence of the tomb.

* She left him the riband from her hair.

St Paul's king-dirging note
The city's heart hath smote—
The city's heart is struck with thought more solemn than the tone!
A shadow sweeps apace
Before the nation's face,
Confusing in a shapeless blot the sepulchre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
The courtly dames are pale—
A widow o'er the purple bows, and weeps its splendour dim:
And we who hold the boon,
A king for freedom won,
Do feel eternity rise up between our thanks and him

And while all things express
All glory's nothingness,
A royal maiden treadeth firm where *that* departed trod!
The deathly scented crown
Weighs her shining ringlets down,
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her:
No outward pageants win her
From memories that in her soul are rolling wave on wave—
Her palace walls enring
The dust that was a king—
And very cold beneath her feet, she feels her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,
Can scarce forgotten be,—
Who clasped a little infant dead, for all a kingdom's worth!
The mournèd, blessèd One,
Who views Jehovah's throne,
Aye smiling to the angels, that she lost a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
Remembers what has been—
Her childhood's rest by loving heart, and sport on grassy sod—
Alas! can others wear
A mother's heart for her?
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and calleth upon God.

Yea! call on God, thou maiden
Of spirit nobly laden,
And leave such happy days behind, for happy making years!
A nation looks to thee
For stedfast sympathy
Make room within thy bright clear eyes for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles
Shall give thee back their smiles,
And as thy mother joys in thee, in them shalt *thou* rejoice;
Rejoice to meekly bow
A somewhat paler brow,
While the King of kings shall bless thee by the British people's voice!



VICTORIA'S TEARS *

"Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!
Now murmurs like the sea or like the storm
Or like the flames on forests move and mount
From rank to rank and loud and louder roll,
Till all the people is one vast applause."
LANDOR'S *Gebir*

"O MAIDEN! heir of kings!
A king has left his place!
The majesty of Death has swept
All other from his face!
And thou upon thy mother's breast
No longer lean adown,
But take the glory for the rest,
And rule the land that loves thee best!"
She heard, and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls,
They reined her hundred steeds,
They shouted at her palace gate,
"A noble Queen succeeds!"
Her name has stirred the mountain's sleep,
Her praise has filled the town!
And mourners God had stricken deep,
Looked hearkening up, and did not weep
Alone she wept,
Who wept, to wear a crown!

She saw no purples shine,
For tears had dimmed her eyes;
She only knew her childhood's flowers
Were happier pageantries!
And while her heralds played the part,
For million shouts to drown—
"God save the Queen" from hill to mart,—
She heard through all her beating heart,
And turned and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!

God save thee, weeping Queen!
Thou shalt be well beloved!
The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
As those pure tears have moved!
The nature in thine eyes we see,
That tyrants cannot own—
The love that guardeth liberties!
Strange blessing on the nation lies,
Whose Sovereign wept—
Yea! wept, to wear its crown!

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
With blessing more divine!
And fill with happier love than earth's,
That tender heart of thine!
That when the thrones of earth shall be
As low as graves brought down;
A piercèd hand may give to thee
The crown which angels shout to see!
Thou wilt not *weep*,
To wear that heavenly crown!



VANITIES.*

"From fading things, fond men, lift your desire.
DRUMMOND

COULD ye be very blest in hearkening
Youth's often danced-to melodies—
Hearing it piped, the midnight darkening
Doth come to show the starry skies,—
To freshen garden-flowers, the rain?—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in urging
A captive nation's strength to thunder
Out into foam, and with its surging
The Xerxean fetters break asunder?
The storm is cruel as the chain!—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in paling
Your brows with studious nights and days,
When like your lamps your life is fading,
And sighs, not breath, are wrought from praise?
Your tombs, not ye, that praise retain—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Yea! but ye *could* be very blest,
If some ye nearest love were nearest!
Must *they* not love when lovèd best?
Must *ye* not happiest love when dearest?
Alas! how hard to feel again,—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

For those ye love are not unsighing,
They are unchanging least of all:
And ye the loved—ah! no denying,
Will leave your lips beneath the pall,
When passioned ones have o'er it sain—
"It is in vain, it is in vain!



THE LITTLE FRIEND.*

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE MADE AND SENT TO ME.

—το δ' ηδη εξ οφθαλμων απεληλυθεν.
MARCUS ANTONINUS.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
  Shall bear thy dearer name;
And many a word the leaves shall touch,
  For thee who form'dst the same!
And on them, many a thought shall grow
  'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not know
  That thought and pain are one!

Yes! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,
  A while since, at my side—
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,
  So very hard to chide:
The childish vision at thine heart,
  The lesson on the knee;
The wandering looks which *would* depart,
  Like gulls, across the sea!

The laughter, which no half-belief
  In wrath could all suppress;
The falling tears, which looked like grief,
  And were but gentleness.
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
  As Edens were not done—
Mistaking still the cherub's sword
  For shining of the sun!

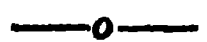
The sportive speech with wisdom in't—
  The question strange and bold—
The childish fingers in the print
  Of God's creative hold
The praying words in whispers said,
  The sin with sobs confest;
The leaning of the young meek head
  Upon the Saviour's breast!

The gentle consciousness of praise,
  With hues that went and came;
The brighter blush, a word could raise,
  Were *that*—a father's name!
The shadow on thy smile for each
  That on his face could fall!
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
  What soon it teacheth all

Sit still as erst beside his feet!
  The future days are dim,—
But those will seem to thee most sweet
  Which keep thee nearest *him!*
Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
  And let him see arise
A clearer sun and greener earth
  Within thy loving eyes!—

Ah, loving eyes! that used to lift
  Your childhood to my face—
That leave a memory on the gift
  I look on in your place—

May bright-eyed hosts your guardians be
From all but thankful tears,—
While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
Ye meet th' advancing years!



THE STUDENT.*

Τι ουν τουτο προς σε; και ουδεν λεγω οτι προς τον τεθνηκοτα, αλλα προς τον ζωντα, τι ο επαινος;—

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

"My midnight lamp is weary as my soul,
And, being unimmortal, has gone out.
And now alone yon moony lamp of heaven,
Which God lit and not man, illuminates
These volumes, others wrote in weariness
As I have read them; and this cheek and brow,
Whose paleness, burnèd in with heats of thought,
Would make an angel smile to see how ill
Clay thrust from Paradise consorts with mind—
If angels could, like men, smile bitterly.

"Yet, must my brow be paler! I have vowed
To clip it with the crown which cannot fade,
When *it* is faded. Not in vain ye cry,
O glorious voices that survive the tongues
From whence was drawn your separate sovereignty—
For I would reign beside you! I would melt
The golden treasures of my health and life
Into that name! My lips are vowed apart
From cheerful words; mine ears, from pleasant sounds;
Mine eyes, from sights God made so beautiful,—
My feet, from wanderings under shady trees;
Mine hands, from clasping of dear-loving friends,—
My very heart, from feelings which move soft!
Vowed am I from the day's delightsomeness,
And dreams of night! and when the house is dumb
In sleep, which is the pause 'twixt life and life,
I live and waken thus; and pluck away

Slumber's sleek poppies from my painèd lids—
Goading my mind with thongs wrought by herself,
To toil and struggle along this mountain-path
Which hath no mountain-airs; until she sweat
Like Adam's brow, and gasp, and rend away
In agony, her garment of the flesh!"

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,
And burned till morning. But his lamp of life
Till morning burned not! He was found embraced,
Close, cold, and stiff, by Death's compelling sleep;
His breast and brow supported on a page
Charàctered over with a praise of *fame*,
Of its divineness and beatitude—
Words which had often caused that heart to throb,
That cheek to burn; though silent lay they now,
Without a single beating in the pulse,
And all the fever gone!

I saw a bay
Spring verdant from a newly fashioned grave.
The grass upon the grave was verdanter,
That being watered by the eyes of One
Who bore not to look up toward the tree!
Others looked on it—some, with passing glance,
Because the light wind stirrèd in its leaves;
And some, with sudden lighting of the soul
In admiration's ecstasy!—Ay! some
Did wag their heads like oracles, and say,
"'Tis very well!"—but none rememberèd
The heart which housed the root, except that ONE
Whose sight was lost in weeping!

Is it thus,
Ambition, idol of the intellect?
Shall we drink aconite, alone to use
Thy golden bowl? and sleep ourselves to death—
To dream thy visions about life? O Power
That art a very feebleness!—before
Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of clay,
And round thy senseless brow bind diadems
With paralytic hands, and shout "a god,"

With voices mortal hoarse! Who can discern
Th' infirmities they share in? Being blind,
We cannot see thy blindness: being weak,
We cannot feel thy weakness: being low,
We cannot mete thy baseness: being unwise,
We cannot understand thy idiocy.



STANZAS.*

I MAY sing, but minstrel's singing
Ever ceaseth with his playing.
I may smile; but time is bringing
Thoughts for smiles to wear away in
I may view thee, mutely loving;
But *shall* view thee so in dying!
I may sigh; but life's removing,
And with breathing endeth sighing!
Be it so!

When no song of mine comes near thee,
Will its memory fail to soften?
When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
Will thy smile be used as often?
When my looks the darkness boundeth,
Will thine own be lighted after?
When my sigh no longer soundeth,
Wilt thou list another's laughter?
Be it so!



Sonnets.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling, interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground!
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
God-one, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast,
Warm with her first born's slumber in that nest!
The poet sings upon the earth grave riven,
Before the naughty world soon self forgiven
For wronging him, and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory! Heaven is high—
Sing, poet with the sorrow! Earth is low.
The universe's inward voices cry
"Amen" to either song of joy and woe—
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell, and could not pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
"Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him! in this sackcloth spun
As in that purple!"— But I answer, nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? Can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears, both prayer and praise.



CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken! there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where "dust to dust" the love from life disjoined-
And if before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
Crying, "Where are ye, O my loved and loving?"
I know a Voice would sound, "Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for earth?"



TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

IN HER GARDEN.

What time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend! I will not proudly say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
By spoiling so their name. And yet, repeat
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as wide to love as theirs to May,—
"Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature true,
Though not as precious." Thou art unperplext,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,
To preach a sermon on so known a text!



ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY R. B HAYDON

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. *He*, with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,--
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high-altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free,
Our Haydon's hand hath flung out from the mist!
No portrait this, with Academic air—
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine hath run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled,— yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.



IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day,
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee,
When such do field work on a morn of May
But now I look upon my flowers, decay
Hath met them in my hands, more fatally,
Because more warmly clasped, and sobs are free
To come instead of songs What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields, and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I
My heart is very tired— my strength is low—
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.*



TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well —
That is light grieving! lighter, none befell,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing; at her marriage bell,
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot
That moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Whoever weep; albeit, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place,
And touch but tombs,—look up! Those tears will run
Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.



GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless—
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls, as countries, lieth silent bare
Under the blenching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death;
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it: the marble eyelids are not wet—
If it could weep, it could arise and go.



SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice, that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh—
Not reason's subtle count. Not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew—
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.



COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet--
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing! As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth;
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.



PERPLEXED MUSIC.

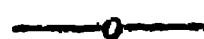
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur,—"Where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these?"
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded: their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences;
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.



WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil—
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.



FUTURITY.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil, I am strong,—
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush God keeps a niche
In Heaven to hold our idols and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,—
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—
The dust shook from their beauty, glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light



THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses, in the church's brow and breast,
And, by them, we find rest in our unrest,
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do you entreat
God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat
The first is, JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet —
And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned
LOOKED UPON PETER Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little, and mourned,—
That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
Which HE who could not sin, yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject, but not sustain!



THE LOOK.

The Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word—
No gesture of reproach! The Heavens serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way. The forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess; even those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
"I never knew this man"—did quail and fall,
As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and turnèd free,
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

—o—

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
"Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break My heart upon,
For all God's charge to His high angels may
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning sun,—
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?—
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy deathly need is obdurest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,—
Because I KNOW *this man, let him be clear.*"

—o—

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND L. C.

If God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Then pray alone—"O Christ, come tenderly!
By Thy forsaken Sonship, in the red
Drear wine-press,—and the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine;
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine."



WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

The woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarolle;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident controul,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus, swift and stedfast; thus, intent and strong;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.



PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude, and thirst of sweetnesses;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower grew nettle rough
The thoughts called bees stung me to festering
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting

FLUSH OR FAUNUS

YOU see this dog. It was but yesterday
I mused, forgetful of his presence here,
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear;
When from the pillow, where wet cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its way
Right sudden against my face,— two golden-clear
Large eyes astonished mine,— a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek, to dry the spray!
I started first, as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove:
But as my bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness; thanking the true PAN,
Who, by low creatures, leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
Its flesh rocks round, and every breath it sends,
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! Out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till, in deep calms of space, my soul may right
Her nature; shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.



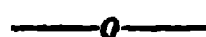
AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentrated in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
In the free voice . . . O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me! Do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face-to-face with GOD?



DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause, complaining on—
Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy main,
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.



PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.*

"O DREARY life!" we cry, "O dreary life!"
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle. Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah swards
Unweary sweep, hills watch, unworn, and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest trees,
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory. O Thou God of old!
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to *these*,—
But so much patience, as a blade of grass
Grows by contented through the heat and cold.



CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might be faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints?—At least it may be said,
"Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God!"



EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination, given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory,—down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead; flake following flake,
To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers! let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIEF!—holy therein,
That, by the grief of One came all our good.



ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth appear
Perfect enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills!
We cannot say the morning sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course; nor that the clear
Strong stars, without significance, insphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good; and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.



TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,—
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! That thou to woman's claim,
And man's, might join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame;
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.



TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn:—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name: and while before
The world, thou burnest in a poet fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire.

—o—

THE PRISONER.

I count the dismal time by months and years,
Since last I felt the greensward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine;
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

—o—

INSUFFICIENCY.

When I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free,
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony.
But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all;
And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall!
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall.



TWO SKETCHES.

I

The shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek;
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak:—
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak,
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall!
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart:—
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
While friends may whisper, as they stand apart,
"Methinks there's still some warmer place within."

II

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee
Her fair superfluous ringlets, without check,
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose This sign, outwardly,
And a like woman covering seems to deck
Her inner nature For she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens, as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high hearted fortitude
To smell this flower, come near it such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood



MOUNTAINEER AND POET

The simple goatherd, between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist—
While the snow mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward, up to eminence!
Ye are not great, because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright, because God's glory shines for you



THE POET

The poet hath the child's sight in his breast,
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him, holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all His heavens as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst,
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst,
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.



HIRAM POWERS'S GREEK SLAVE

They say Ideal Beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with the shackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave as if the artist meant her,
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed, not darkened, where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands,
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger!—and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world! Appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty, against man's wrong!
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs but west,—and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.



LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space:
Yet what man stirs a finger breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds, with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace!—
I think, this sudden joyaunce which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs
I think, this passionate sigh, which, half-begun,
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.



LOVE.

WE cannot live, except, thus, mutually,
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life: and when we bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes, there,
We live most life, whoever breathes most air
And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,
The conscience and the concentration, both,
Make mere life, Love. For life in perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.



HEAVEN AND EARTH

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour
REVELATION.

GOD, who, with thunders and great voices kept
Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver paced
Along the interior gyres, and open faced
Melodious angels round —canst intercept
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste,
Which lasted half an hour! Lo, I, who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee, by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our noisy years!
As heaven has paused from song, let earth, from moan



THE PROSPECT

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view.
And thus, alas! since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
We miss the prospect which we're called unto,
By grief we're fools to use Be still and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch along
The sunset consummation-lights of death



HUGH STUART BOYD †

HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric Lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off,
With all her beckoning hills, whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
Yet such things were, to him, not wholly lost,—
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
To have fair visions rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost
And seeing, no sounds of softly turned book leaves,
Sappho's crown rose, and Meleager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight, on Greek-burnished eves:
Till Sensual and Unsensual seemed one thing
Viewed from one level, earth's reapers at the sheaves,
Not plainer than Heaven's angels marshalling!



HUGH STUART BOYD

HIS DEATH, 1848

Beloved friend, who, living many years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
To visible nature's elemental cheers!
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
Because thou wast aweary of this one —
I think thine angel's patience first was done,
And that he spake out with celestial tears,
"Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
This soul that smiles in darkness!"

† To whom was inscribed in grateful affection my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848, Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sate by the death bed of her father's friend and hers.

Stedfast friend,
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the Dead, found faithful to the end?

—o—

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me: Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars, whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes! now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn, by tears: now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years agone,
Entoning, from these leaves, the Græcian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence of the shelf within my gaze!
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting days!

—o—

FUTURE AND PAST.

My future will not copy fair my past.
I wrote that once; and, thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And saw instead there, *thee*; not unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled
—I seek no copy now of life's *first* half!
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the world!

Early Poems.

1826–1833

"Brama assai, poco spera, nulla chiede."—TASSO.

TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTHDAY

"Causa fuit Pater his."—HOR.

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,
That throw their halo round our earth;
Amidst the tender thoughts that rise
To call bright tears to happy eyes;
Amidst the silken words that move
To syllable the names we love;
There glides no day of gentle bliss
More soothing to the heart than *this!*
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear
More fond, than those I write of here!
No name can e'er on tablet shine,
My father! more beloved than *thine!*
'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,
A lingering look of love to cast—
Back th' enchanted world to call,
That beamed around us first of all;
And walk with Memory fondly o'er
The paths where Hope had been before—
Sweet to receive the sylphic sound
That breathes in tenderness around,
Repeating to the listening ear
The names that made our childhood dear—
For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,
To tell, amidst the magic air,
How oft she smiled and lingered there.

Oh! let the deep Aonian shell
Breathe tuneful numbers, clear and well,
While the glad Hours, in fair array,
Lead on this buxom Holiday;
And Time, as on his way he springs,
Hates the last bard who gave him wings;
For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,
My Father! rose my early lays!
And when the lyre was scarce awake,
I loved its strings for *thy* loved sake;
Wooed the kind Muses—but the while
Thought only how to win thy smile—
My proudest fame—my dearest pride—
More dear than all the world beside!
And now, perchance, I seek the tone
For magic that is more its own;
But still my Father's looks remain
The best Mæcenas of my strain;
My gentlest joy, upon his brow
To read the smile, that meets me now—
To hear him, in his kindness, say
The words,—perchance he'll speak to-day!



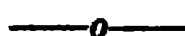
SPENSERIAN STANZAS

ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD

CHILD of the sunny lockes and beautifull brow!
In thoughtfull tendernesse I gaze on thee—
Upon thy daintie cheek Expression's glow
Dauncheth in tyme to thine heart's melodie;
Ne mortall wight mote lovelier urchin see!
Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest of mine
To think—belive the innocent revelrie
Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue eyne—
Whenso the howre of youth no more for thee shall shine.

Ah me! eftsoons thy childhood's pleasaunt dais
Shall fly away, and be a whilome thing!
And sweetest mearimake, and birthday lais
Be recked not of, except when memories bring

Feres to their embers with awaking wing,
To make past love rejoyce thy tender sprite,
Albeit the toyles of daunger thee enring!
Child of the wavy lockes and brow of light—
Then be thy conscience pure, as *now* thy face is bright



VERSES TO MY BROTHER

"For we were nursed upon the self same hill"—LYCIDAS

I WILL write down thy name, and when 'tis writ,
Will turn me from the hum that mortals keep
In the wide world without, and gaze on it!
It telleth of the past—calling from sleep
Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as make us smile, and weep

Beloved and best! what thousand feelings start.
As o'er the paper's course my fingers move—
My brother! dearest, kindest as thou art!
How can these lips my heart's affection prove?
I could not speak the words, if words could speak my love.

Together have we passed our infant hours,
Together sported Childhood's spring away,
Together culled young Hope's fast budding flowers,
To wreathe the forehead of each coming day!
Yes! for the present's sun makes e'en the future gay

And when the laughing mood was nearly o'er,
Together, many a minute did we wile
On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter lore;
While one young critic, on the classic style,
Would sagely try to frown, and make the other smile.

But now alone thou con'st the ancient tome -
And sometimes thy dear studies, it may be,
Are crossed by dearer dreams of me and home!
Alone I muse on Homer—thoughts are free—
And if mine often stray, they go in search of thee!

I may not praise thee *here*—I will not bless!
Yet all thy goodness doth my memory bear,
Cherished by more than Friendship's tenderness—
And, in the silence of my evening prayer,
Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear name shall be there!

—o—

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF LORD BYRON.

———— λέγε πᾶσιν ἀπώλετο.—BION.

————"I am not now
That which I have been."—CHILDE HAROLD.

HE *was*, and *is* not! Græcia's trembling shore,
Sighing through all her palmy groves, shall tell
That Harold's pilgrimage at last is o'er—
Mute the impassioned tongue, and tuneful shell,
That erst was wont in noblest strains to swell—
Hushed the proud shouts that rode Ægea's wave!
For lo! the great Deliv'rer breathes farewell!
Gives to the world his mem'ry and a grave—
Expiring in the land he only lived to save!

Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er thy widowed brow,
For aye, the cypress wreath of sorrow twine;
And in thy new-formed beauty, desolate, throw
The fresh-culled flowers on *his* sepulchral shrine.
Yes! let that heart whose fervour was all thine,
In consecrated urn lamented be!
That generous heart where genius thrilled divine,
Hath spent its last most glorious throb for thee—
Then sank amid the storm that made thy children free!

Britannia's Poet! Græcia's hero, sleeps!
And Freedom, bending o'er the breathless clay—
Lifts up her voice, and in her anguish weeps!
For *us*, a night hath clouded o'er our day,
And hushed the lips that breathed our fairest lay.
Alas! and must the British lyre resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings away
Of him who on its strings such music found,
And taught its startling chords to give so sweet a sound!

The theme grows sadder—but my soul shall find
A language in these tears! No more—no more!
Soon, 'midst the shrieking of the tossing wind,
The "dark blue depths" he sang of, shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore!
His grave is thick with voices—to the ear
Murm'ring an awful tale of greatness o'er:
But Memory strives with Death, and lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's lonely bier!



MEMORY.

My Fancy's steps have often strayed
To some fair vale the hills have made,
Where sparkling waters travel o'er,
And hold a mirror to the shore;
Winding with murmurings in and out,
To find the flowers which grow about.
And there, perchance, in childhood bold,
Some little elf, four summers old,
Adown the vales may chance to run,
To hunt his shadow in the sun!
But when the waters meet his eyes,
He starts and stops with glad surprise,
And shouts, with merry voice, to view
The banks of green, the skies of blue,
Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,
Lilies, and trees of apple blow,
Seeming so beautiful below!
He peeps above—he glances round,
And then looks down, and thinks he's found
Reposing in the stream, to woo one,
A world even lovelier than the true one.

Thus, with visions gay and light,
Hath Fancy loved my page to dight;
Yet Thought hath, through a vista, seen
Something less frivolous, I ween:
Then, while my chatting pen runs on,
I'll tell you what she dreamt upon.

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,
Which sweeps the hills of Life between;
And, when our walking hour is past,
Upon its shore we rest at last;
And love to view the waters fair,
And see lost joys depictured there.

My ——, when thy feet are led
To press those banks we all must tread—
May Virtue's smile and Learning's praise
Adorn the waters to thy gaze,
And, o'er their lucid course, be lent
The sunshine of a life well spent!
Then, if a thought should glad thy breast
Of those who loved thee first and best,
My name, perchance, may haunt the spot,
Not quite unprized—nor all forgot

——o——

TO ——

MINE is a wayward lay,
And, if its echoing rhymes I try to string,
Proveth a truant thing,
Whenso some names I love, send it away!

For then, eyes swimming o'er,
And claspèd hands, and smiles in fondness meant,
Are much more eloquent—
So it had fain begone, and speak no more!

Yet shall it come again,
Ah, friend beloved! if so thy wishes be,
And, with mild melody,
I will, upon thine ear, cadence my strain—

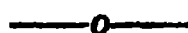
Cadence my simple line,
Unfashioned by the cunning hand of Art,
But coming from my heart,
To tell the message of its love to thine!

As ocean shells, when taken
From Ocean's bed, will faithfully repeat
Her ancient music sweet!—
Ev'n so these words, true to my heart, shall waken!

Oh! while our bark is seen,
Our little bark of kindly, social love,
Down life's clear stream to move
Toward the summer shores, where all is green—

So long thy name shall bring
Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,
And thousand tender tales,
To freshen the fond hearts that round thee cling!

Hast thou not looked upon
The flowerets of the field in lowly dress?
Blame not my simpleness
Think only of my love!— my song is gone



STANZAS

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN MR. EMERSON'S JOURNAL, WHICH STATES THAT, ON THE MENTION OF LORD BYRON'S NAME, CAPTAIN DEMETRIUS, AN OLD ROUMELIOT, BURST INTO TEARS.

Name not his name, or look afar—
For when my spirit hears
That name, its strength is turned to woe—
My voice is turned to tears.

Name me the host and battle-storm,
Mine own good sword shall stem,
Name me the foeman and the block,
I have a smile for *them*!

But name *him* not, or cease to mark
This brow where passions sweep—
Behold, a warrior is a man,
And as a man may weep!

I could not scorn my Country's foes,
  Did not these tears descend—
I could not love my Country's fame,
  And not my Country's Friend.

Deem not his memory e'er can be
  Upon our spirits dim—
Name us the generous and the free,
  And we must think of *him*!

For his voice resounded through our land
  Like the voice of liberty,
As when the war trump of the wind
  Upstirs our dark blue sea.

His arm was in the foremost rank,
  Where embattled thousands roll—
His name was in the love of Greece,
  And his spell was on her soul!

But the arm that wielded her good sword,
  The brow that wore the wreath,
The lips that breathed the deathless thought—
  They went asleep in death.

Ye left his HEART, when ye took away
  The dust in funeral state,
And we dumbly placed in a little urn
  That home of all things great.

The banner streamed—the war shout rose—
  Our heroes played their part!
But not a pulse would throb or burn—
  Oh! could it be *his* heart!

I will not think—'tis worse than vain
  Upon such thoughts to keep;
Then, Briton, name me not his name—
  I cannot choose but weep!

THE PAST.

There is a silence upon the Ocean,
Albeit it swells with a feverish motion:
Like to the battle camp's fearful calm,
While the banners are spread, and the warriors arm.

The winds beat not their drum to the waves
But sullenly moan in the distant caves;
Talking over, before they rise,
Some of their dark conspiracies.

And so it is in this life of ours,
A calm may be on the present hours,
But the calmest hour of festive glee
May turn the mother of woe to thee.

I will betake me to the Past,
And she shall make my love at last;
I will find my home in her tarrying-place—
I will gaze all day on her deathly face!

Her form, though awful, is fair to view,
The clasp of her hand, though cold, is true;
Her shadowy brow hath no changefulness,
And her numbered smiles can grow no less!

Her voice is like a pleasant song,
Which we have not heard for very long,
And which a joy on our souls will cast,
Though we know not where we heard it last.

She shall walk with me, away, away,
Where'er the mighty have left their clay;
She shall speak to me in places lone,
With a low and holy tone.

Ay! when I have lit my lamp at night,
She will be present with my sprite;
And I will say, whate'er it be,
Every word she telleth me!

THE PRAYER

Methought that I did stand upon a tomb—
And all was silent as the dust beneath,
While feverish thoughts upon my soul would come,
Losing my words in tears. I thought of death,
And prayed that when my lips gave out the breath,
The friends I loved like life might stay behind
So, for a little while, my name might eath
Be something dear,—spoken with voices kind,
Heard with remembering looks, from eyes which tears would blind!

I prayed that I might sink into my rest,
(O foolish, selfish prayer!) before them all
So I might look my last on those loved best—
So never would my voice repining call,
And never would my tears impassioned fall
On one familiar face turning to clay!
So would my tune of life be musical,
Albeit abrupt—like airs the Spaniards play,
Which in the sweetest part break off, and die away.

Methought I looked around! the scene was rife
With little vales, green banks, and waters heaving,
And every living thing did joy in life,
And every thing of beauty did seem living—
Oh then, life's pulse was at my heart reviving,
And then I knew that it was good to bear
Dispensèd woe, that by the spirit's grieving
It might be weanèd from a world so fair!—
Thus with submissive words mine heart did close its prayer.



ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW.

PLACED IN THE EXHIBITION

Daughter of Spain! a passer by
May mark the cheek serenely pale—
The dark eyes which dream silently,
And the calm lip which gives no wail!

Calm! it bears not a deeper trace
  Of feelings it disdained to show;
We look upon the Widow's face,
  And only read the Patriot's woe!

No word, no look, no sigh of thine,
  Would make *his* glory seem more dim;
Thou would'st not give to vulgar eyne
  The sacred tear which fell for HIM.

Thou would'st not hold to the world's view
  Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—
The jeering world—it only knew
  Of all thine anguish—that thou WERT!

While o'er *his* grave thy steps would go
  With a firm tread,—stilling thy love,—
As if the dust would blush below
  To feel one faltering foot above.

For Spain, *he* dared the noble strife—
  For Spain, he gave his latest breath;
And he who lived the Patriot's life,
  Was dragged to die the traitor's death!

And the shout of thousands swept around,
  As he stood the traitor's block beside;
But his dying lips gave a free sound—
  Let the foe weep!—THY brow had *pride*,

Yet haply in the midnight air,
  When none might part thy God and thee,
The lengthened sob, the passionate prayer,
  Have spoken thy soul's agony!

But silence else, thou past away—
  The plaint unbreathed, the anguish hid—
More voiceless than the echoing clay
  Which idly knocked thy coffin's lid.

Peace be to thee! while Britons see
 This place, if British souls they be
'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
 To see Riego's widow THERE!

——o——

SONG.

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter!
Smile, as tears were coming after!
Marry your pleasures to your woes;
And think life's green well worth its rose!

No sorrow will your heart betide,
Without a comfort by its side;
The sun may sleep in his sea bed,
But you have starlight overhead.

Trust not to Joy! the rose of June,
When opened wide, will wither soon,
Italian days without twilight,
Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,
Flits away on rainbow wings;
And when they look the gayest, know,
It is that they are spread to go!

——o——

THE DREAM

A FRAGMENT.

I HAD a dream!—my spirit was unbound
From the dark iron of its dungeon, clay,
And rode the steeds of Time;– my thoughts had sound,
And spoke without a word,—I went away
Among the buried ages, and did lay
The pulses of my heart beneath the touch
Of the rude minstrel Time, that he should play
Thereon, a melody which might seem such
As musing spirits love—mournful, but not too much!

I had a dream—and there mine eyes did see
The shadows of past deeds like present things—
The sepulchres of Greece and Hespery,
Ægyptus, and old lands, gave up their kings,
Their prophets, saints, and minstrels, whose lute strings
Keep a long echo—yea, the dead, white bones
Did stand up by the house whereto Death clings,
And dressed themselves in life, speaking of thrones,
And fame, and power, and beauty, in familiar tones!

I went back further still, for I beheld
What time the earth was one fair Paradise—
And over such bright meads the waters welled,
I wot the rainbow was content to rise
Upon the earth when absent from the skies!
And there were tall trees that I never knew,
Whereon sate nameless birds in merry guise,
Folding their radiant wings, as the flowers do,
When summer nights send sleep down with the dew.

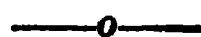
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Anon there came a change—a terrible motion
That made all living things grow pale and shake!
The dark Heavens bowed themselves unto the ocean,
Like a strong man in strife. Ocean did take
His flight across the mountains; and the lake
Was lashed into a sea where the winds ride.
Earth was no more, for in her merrymake
She had forgot her God—Sin claimed his bride,
And with his vampire breath sucked out her life's fair tide!

Life went back to her nostrils, and she raised
Her spirit from the waters once again—
The lovely sights, on which I erst had gazed,
Were *not*—though she was beautiful as when
The Grecian called her "Beauty"—sinful men
Walked i' the track of the waters, and felt bold—
Yea, they looked up to Heaven in calm disdain,
As if no eye had seen its vault unfold
Darkness, and fear, and death!—as if a tale were told!

And ages fled away within my dream;
And still Sin made the heart his dwelling-place,
Eclipsing Heaven from men; but it would seem
That two or three dared commune face to face,
And speak of the soul's life, of hope, and grace—
Anon there rose such sounds as angels breathe—
For a God came to die, bringing down peace—
"Pan *was not;*" and the darkness that did wreathe
The earth, passed from the soul—Life came by death!

* * * * * *



RIGA'S LAST SONG.

I HAVE looked my last on my native land,
And over these strings I throw my hand,
To say in the death hour's minstrelsy,
Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I have looked my last on my native shore;
I shall tread my country's plains no more;
But my last thought is of her fame;
But my last breath speaketh her name!

And though these lips shall soon be still,
They may now obey the spirit's will;
Though the dust be fettered, the spirit is free—
Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I go to death—but I leave behind
The stirrings of Freedom's mighty mind;
Her voice shall arise from plain to sky,
Her steps shall tread where my ashes lie!

I looked on the mountains of proud Souli,
And the mountains they seemed to look on me;
I spoke my thought on Marathon's plain,
And Marathon seemed to speak again!

And as I journeyed on my way,
I saw an infant group at play;
One shouted aloud in his childish glee,
And showed me the heights of Thermopylæ!

I gazed on peasants hurrying by,—
The dark Greek pride crouched in their eye;
So I swear in my death-hour's minstrelsy,
Hellas, my country! thou *shalt* be free!

No more!—I dash my lyre on the ground—
I tear its strings from their home of sound—
For the music of slaves shall never keep
Where the hand of a freeman was wont to sweep!

And I bend my brows above the block,
Silently waiting the swift death shock;
For these lips shall speak what becomes the free—
Or—Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

He bowed his head with a Patriot's pride,
And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre beside!
The soul of each had passed away—
Soundless the strings—breathless the clay!

— — o —

THE VISION OF FAME.

Did ye ever sit on summer noon,
  Half musing and half asleep,
When ye smile in such a dreamy way,
  Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick beneath,
  And the welkin blue above;
When there is not a sound but the cattle's low,
  And the voice of the woodland dove?

A while ago, and I dreamèd thus—
  I mused on ancient story,—
For the heart like a minstrel of old doth seem,
  It delighteth to sing of glory.

What time I saw before me stand
   A bright and lofty One;
A golden lute was in her hand,
   And her brow drooped thereon.

But the brow that drooped was raisèd soon,
   Showing its royal sheen —
It was, I guessed, no human brow,
   Though pleasant to human een

And this brow of peerless majesty
   With its whiteness did enshroud
Two eyes that, darkly mystical,
   'Gan look up at a cloud.

Like to the hair of Berenice,
   Fetch'd from its house of light,
Was the hair which wreathed her shadowless form·
   And Fame the ladye hight!

But as she wended on to me,
   My heart's deep fear was chidden;
For she called up the sprite of Melody,
   Which in her lute lay hidden.

When ye speak to well-beloved ones,
   Your voice is tender and low:
The wires methought did love her touch—
   For they did answer so

And her lips in such a quiet way
   Gave the chant soft and long,—
You might have thought she only breathed,
   And that her breath was song:—

      "When Death shrouds thy memory,
         Love is no shrine—
      The dear eyes that weep for thee
         Soon sleep like thine!
      The wail murmured over thee
         Fainteth away;
      And the heart which kept love for thee
         Turns into clay!

"But would'st thou remembered be,
  Make me thy vow;
This verse that flows gushingly,
  Telleth thee how—
Linking thy hand in mine
  Listen to me,
So not a thought of thine
  Dieth with thee—

"Rifle thy pulsing heart
  Of the gifts love made;
Bid thine eye's light depart;
  Let thy cheek fade!
Give me the slumber deep,
  Which night long seems;
Give me the joys that creep
  Into thy dreams!

"Give me thy youthful years,
  Merriest that fly—
So the word, spoke in *tears*,
  Liveth for aye!
So thy sepulchral stone,
  Nations may raise—
What time thy soul hath known
  The *worth of praise!*"

She did not sing this chant to me,
  Though I was sitting by;
But I listened to it with chainèd breath,
  That had no power to sigh.

And ever as the chant went on,
  Its measure changed to wail;
And ever as the lips sang on,
  Her face did grow more pale.

Paler and paler—till anon
  A fear came o'er my soul;
For the flesh curled up from her bones,
  Like to a blasted scroll!

Ay! silently it dropped away,
Before my wondering sight—
There was only a bleachèd skeleton,
Where erst was ladye bright!

But still the vacant sockets gleamed
With supernatural fires—
But still the bony hands did ring
Against the shuddering wires!

Alas, alas! I wended home,
With a sorrow and a shame—
Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts?
Woe's me! for THIS is FAME!



THE TEMPEST.

A FRAGMENT.

"Mors erat ante oculos."
LUCAN lib ix.

* * * * * *

The forest made my home— the voiceful streams
My minstrel throng the everlasting hills,—
Which marry with the firmament, and cry
Unto the brazen thunder, "Come away,
Come from thy secret place, and try our strength,"—
Enwrapped me with their solemn arms. Here, light
Grew pale as darkness, scarèd by the shade
O' the forest Titans Here, in piney state,
Reigned Night, the Æthiopian queen, and crówned
The charmèd brow of Solitude, her spouse.

* * * * * *

A sign was on creation You beheld
All things encoloured in a sulph'rous hue,
As day were sick with fear. The haggard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air;
The top boughs of the forest, all aghast,
Stared in the face of Heaven; the deep-mouthed wind,

That hath a voice to bay the armèd sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten hound;
And only that askance the shadows, flew
Some open-beakèd birds in wilderment,
Naught stirred abroad. All dumb did Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm.

It came in power. You soon might hear afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder sound
Over the mountain battlements, the sky
Being deep-stained with hues fantastical,
Red like to blood, and yellow like to fire,
And black like plumes at funerals; overhead
You might behold the lightning faintly gleam
Amid the clouds which thrill and gape aside,
And straight again shut up their solemn jaws,
As if to interpose between Heaven's wrath
And Earth's despair. Interposition brief!
Darkness is gathering out her mighty pall
Above us, and the pent-up rain is loosed,
Down trampling in its fierce delirium.

Was not my spirit gladdened as with wine,
To hear the iron rain, and view the mark
Of battle on the banner of the clouds?
Did I not hearken for the battle-cry,
And rush along the bowing woods to meet
The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts
Hissing around him with rebellion vain?
Yea! and I lifted up my glorying voice
In an "All hail;" when, wildly resonant,
As brazen chariots rushing from the war,
As passioned waters gushing from the rock,
As thousand crashèd woods, the thunder cried:
And at his cry the forest tops were shook
As by the woodman's axe; and far and near
Staggered the mountains with a muttered dread.

All hail unto the lightning! hurriedly
His lurid arms are glaring through the air,
Making the face of Heaven to show like hell!
Let him go breathe his sulphur stench about,

And, pale with death's own mission, lord the storm!
Again the gleam—the glare: I turned to hail
Death's mission: at my feet there lay the dead!
The dead—the dead lay there! I could not view
(For Night espoused the storm, and made all dark)
Its features, but the lightning in his course
Shivered above a white and corpse-like heap,
Stretched in the path, as if to show its prey,
And have a triumph ere he passed. Then I
Crouched down upon the ground, and groped about
Until I touched that thing of flesh, rain-drenched,
And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did refrain
My soul from natural horror! I did lift
The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay,
Unto my knee; and passed my fingers o'er
The wet face, touching every lineament,
Until I found the brow: and chafed its chill,
To know if life yet lingered in its pulse.
And while I was so busied, there did leap,
From out the entrails of the firmament,
The lightning, who his white unblenching breath
Blew in the dead man's face, discovering it
As by a staring day. I knew that face—
His, who did hate me—his, whom I did hate!

I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not from the ground!
But felt my lips shake without cry or breath,
And mine heart wrestle in my breast to still
The tossing of its pulses; and a cold,
Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my brow.
Albeit such darkness brooded all around,
I had dread knowledge that the open eyes
Of that dead man were glaring up at mine,
With their unwinking, unexpressive stare;
And mine I could not shut nor turn away.
The man was my familiar. I had borne
Those eyes to scowl on me their living hate,
Better than I could bear their deadliness:
I had endured the curses of those lips,
Far better than their silence. Oh, constrained
And awful silence!—awful peace of death!
There is an answering to all questioning,

That one word—*death.* Our bitterness can throw
No look upon the face of death, and live.
The burning thoughts that erst my soul illumed,
Were quenched at once; as tapers in a pit
Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly reign
In charge of darkness. Farewell all the past!
It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes,
When clay's cold silence pleaded for its sin

Farewell the elemental war! farewell
The clashing of the shielded clouds—the cry
Of scathèd echoes! I no longer knew
Silence from sound, but wandered far away
Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,
To learn its secret things. When armèd foes
Meet on one deck with impulse violent,
The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs,
And shivers in the sea; so with mine heart:
For there had battled in her solitudes,
Contrary spirits; sympathy with power,
And stooping unto power;—the energy
And passiveness,—the thunder and the death!

Within me was a nameless thought: it closed
The Janus of my soul on echoing hinge,
And said "Peace!" with a voice like War's. I bowed,
And trembled at its voice: it gave a key,
Empowered to open out all mysteries
Of soul and flesh; of man, who doth begin,
But endeth not; of life, and *after life.*
* * * * * * *
Day came at last: her light showed grey and sad,
As hatched by tempest, and could scarce prevail
Over the shaggy forest to imprint
Its outline on the sky expressionless,
Almost sans shadow as sans radiance:
An idiocy of light. I wakened from
My deep unslumb'ring dream, but uttered naught.
My living I uncoupled from the dead,
And looked out, 'mid the swart and sluggish air,
For place to make a grave. A mighty tree
Above me, his gigantic arms outstretched,

Poising the clouds. A thousand muttered spells
Of every ancient wind and thund'rous storm,
Had been off-shaken from his scathless bark.
He had heard distant years sweet concord yield,
And go to silence; having firmly kept
Majestical companionship with Time.
Anon his strength waxed proud: his tusky roots
Forced for themselves a path on every side,
Riving the earth; and, in their savage scorn,
Casting it from them like a thing unclean,
Which might impede his naked clambering
Unto the heavens. Now blasted, peeled, he stood,
By the gone night, whose lightning had come in
And rent him, even as it rent the man
Beneath his shade: and there the strong and weak
Communion joined in deathly agony.

There, underneath, I lent my feverish strength,
To scoop a lodgment for the traveller's corse
I gave it to the silence and the pit,
And strewed the heavy earth on all: and then—
I—I, whose hands had formed that silent house,—
I could not look thereon, but turned and wept!

* * * * * *

O Death—O crownèd Death—pale-steedèd Death!
Whose name doth make our respiration brief,
Muffling the spirit's drum! thou, whom men know
Alone by charnel houses, and the dark
Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the scath
Of happy days,—love deemed inviolate!
Thou of the shrouded face, which to have seen
Is to be very awful, like thyself!—
Thou, whom all flesh shall see!—thou, who dost call,
And there is none to answer!—thou, whose call
Changeth all beauty into what we fear,
Changeth all glory into what we tread,
Genius to silence, wrath to nothingness,
And love—not love!—thou hast no change for love!
Thou, who art Life's betrothed, and bear'st her forth
To scare her with sad sights,—who hast thy joy
Where'er the peopled towns are dumb with plague,—
Where'er the battle and the vulture meet,—

Where'er the deep sea writhes like Laocoon
Beneath the serpent winds, the vessels split
On secret rocks, and men go gurgling down,
Down, down, to lose their shriekings in the depth.
O universal thou! who comest aye
Among the minstrels, and their tongue is tied;
Among the sophists, and their brain is still;
Among the mourners, and their wail is done;
Among the dancers, and their tinkling feet
No more make echoes on the tombing earth;
Among the wassail rout, and all the lamps
Are quenched, and withered the wine-pouring hands!

My heart is armèd not in panoply
Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart,
And so confesses, with a human fear,
That only for the hope the cross inspires,
That only for the MAN who died and lives,
'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,
With faintness of the pulse, and backward cling
To life. But knowing what I soothly know,
High-seeming Death, I dare thee! and have hope,
In God's good time, of showing to thy face
An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime
May cast away the low anxieties
That wait upon the flesh—the reptile moods;
And enter that eternity to come,
Where live the dead, and only Death shall die.



A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION.

Ut per aquas quæ nunc rerum simulacra videmus.
LUCRETIUS.

Go, travel 'mid the hills! The summer's hand
Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er them all.
Go, travel 'mid the hills! There, tuneful streams
Are touching myriad stops, invisible;
And winds, and leaves, and birds, and your own thoughts,
(Not the least glad) in wordless chorus, crowd

Around the thymele* of Nature.
Go,
And travel onward. Soon shall leaf and bird,
Wind, stream, no longer sound. Thou shalt behold
Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward,
O'er which anon are spied innumerous sails
Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,
And white as gulls above them, and as fast —
But sink they—sink they out of sight. And now
The wind is springing upward in your face;
And, with its fresh-toned gushings, you may hear
Continuous sound which is not of the wind,
Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cataract's
Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's wilder pulse;
But which rolls on in stern tranquillity,
As memories of evil o'er the soul;
Boweth the blue broad Heaven—What view you? sea—
and sea!
The sea—the glorious sea! from side to side
Swinging the grandeur of his foamy strength,
And undersweeping the horizon,—on—
On—with his life and voice inscrutable.
Pause: sit you down in silence! I have read
Of that Athenian, who, when ocean raged,
Unchained the prisoned music of his lips,
By shouting to the billows, sound for sound.
I marvel how his mind would let his tongue
Affront thereby the ocean's solemnness.
Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,
When overheard the trampling tempests go,
Dashing their lightning from their hoofs? and when
We stand beside the bier? and when we see
The strong bow down to weep—and stray among
Places which dust or mind hath sanctified?
Yea! for such sights and acts do tear apart
The close and subtle clasping of a chain,
Formed not of gold, but of corroded brass,
Whose links are furnished from the common mine
Of every day's event, and want, and wish;
From work-times, diet-times, and sleeping-times;
And thence constructed, mean and heavy links,

* The central point of the choral movements in the Greek theatre.

Within the pandemonic walls of sense,
Enchain our deathless part, constrain our strength,
And waste the goodly stature of our soul.

Howbeit, we love this bondage: we do cleave
Unto the sordid and unholy thing,
Fearing the sudden wrench required to break
Those claspèd links. Behold! all sights and sounds
In air, and sea, and earth, and under earth,
All flesh, all life, all ends, are mysteries;
And all that is mysterious dreadful seems,
And all we cannot understand we fear.
Ourselves do scare ourselves: we hide our sight
In artificial nature from the true,
And throw sensation's veil associative
On God's creation, man's intelligence;
Bowing our high imaginings to eat
Dust, like the serpent, once erect as they;
Binding conspicuous on our reason's brow
Phylacteries of shame; learning to feel
By rote, and act by rule, (man's rule, not God's!)
Until our words grow echoes, and our thoughts
A mechanism of spirit.

Can this last?
No! not for aye. We cannot subject aye
The heaven-born spirit to the earth-born flesh
Tame lions *will* scent blood, and appetite
Carnivorous glare from out their restless eyes.
Passions, emotions, sudden changes, throw
Our nature back upon us till we burn.
What warmed Cyrene's fount? As poets sing,
The *change* from light to dark, from dark to light.

* *

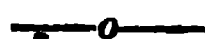
All that doth force this nature back on us,
All that doth force the mind to view the mind,
Engend'reth what is named by men, *sublime*.
Thus when, our wonted valley left, we gain
The mountain's horrent brow, and mark from thence
The sweep of lands extending with the sky;
Or view the spanless plain; or turn our sight
Upon yon deep immensity;—we breathe

As if our breath were marble: to and fro
Do reel our pulses, and our words are mute:
We cannot mete by parts, but grapple all;
We cannot measure with our eye, but soul;
And fear is on us. The extent unused,
Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
To seize upon abstractions: first on space,
The which *eternity in place*, I deem;
And then upon eternity; till thought
Hath formed a mirror from their secret sense,
Wherein we view ourselves, and back recoil
At our own awful likeness; ne'ertheless,
Cling to that likeness with a wonder wild,
And while we tremble, glory— proud in fear.

So ends the prose of life: and so shall be
Unlocked her poetry's magnific store.
And so, thou pathless and perpetual sea,
So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and must brood,
Whether I view thee in thy dreadful peace,
Like a spent warrior hanging in the sun
His glittering arms, and meditating death;
Or whether thy wild visage gath'reth shades,
What time thou marshall'st forth thy waves who hold
A covenant of storms, then roar and wind
Under the rocking rocks; as martyrs lie
Wheel bound; and, dying, utter lofty words!
Whether the strength of day is young and high,
Or whether, weary of the watch, he sits
Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself to death;—
In storm and calm, at morn and eventide,
Still have I stood beside thee, and out thrown
My spirit onward on thine element,—
Beyond thine element,—to tremble low
Before those feet which trod thee as they trod
Earth,—to the holy, happy peopled place,
Where there is no more sea. Yea, and my soul,
Having put on thy vast similitude,
Hath wildly moanèd at her proper depth,
Echoed her proper musings, veiled in shade
Her secrets of decay, and exercised
An elemental strength, in casting up

Rare gems and things of death on fancy's shore,
Till Nature said "Enough."

Who longest dreams,
Dreams not for ever; seeing day and night
And corporal feebleness divide his dreams,
And, on his elevate creations weigh
With hunger, cold, heat, darkness, weariness:
Else should we be like gods; else would the course
Of thought's free wheels, increased in speed and might,
By an eterne volution, oversweep
The heights of wisdom, and invade her depths:
So, knowing all things, should we have all power;
For is not Knowledge power? But mighty spells
Our operation sear; the Babel must,
Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to earth;
The web, half formed, must tumble from our hands,
And, ere they can resume it, lie decayed.
Mind struggles vainly from the flesh. E'en so,
Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
Shall, when the latter days of earth have shrunk
Before the blast of God, affect his heaven;
Lift his scarred brow, confirm his rebel heart,
Shoot his strong wings, and darken pole and pole,—
Till day be blotted into night; and shake
The fevered clouds, as if a thousand storms
Throbbed into life! Vain hope—vain strength—vain flight!
God's arm shall meet God's foe, and hurl him back!



A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH.

MINE ears were deaf to melody,
My lips were dumb to sound:
Where didst thou wander, O my soul,
When ear and tongue were bound?

"I wandered by the stream of time,
Made dark by human tears:
I threw my voice upon the waves,
And *they* did throw me theirs."

And how did sound the waves, my soul?
  And how did sound the waves?
"Hoarse, hoarse, and wild!—they ever dashed
  'Gainst ruined thrones and graves."

And what sight on the shore, my soul?
  And what sight on the shore?
"Twain beings sate there silently,
  And sit there evermore."

Now tell me fast and true, my soul;
  Now tell me of those twain.
"One was yclothed in mourning vest,
  And one, in trappings vain.

"She in the trappings vain, was fair,
  And eke fantastical:
A thousand colours dyed her garb;
  A blackness bound them all.

"In part her hair was gaily wreathed,
  In part was wildly spread:
Her face did change its hue too fast,
  To say 'twas pale or red.

"And when she looked on earth, I thought
  She smiled for very glee:
But when she looked to heaven, I knew
  That tears stood in her ee.

"She held a mirror, there to gaze:
  It could no cheer bestow;
For while her beauty cast the shade,
  Her breath did make it go.

"A harper's harp did lie by her,
  Without the harper's hest;
A monarch's crown did lie by her,
  Wherein an owl had nest:

"A warrior's sword did lie by her,
  Grown rusty since the fight;
A poet's lamp did lie by her —
  Ah me!—where was its light?"

And what didst *thou* say, O my soul,
  Unto that mystic dame?
"I asked her of her tears, and eke
  I asked her of her name.

"She said, she built a prince's throne.
  She said, he ruled the grave,
And that the levelling worm asked not
  If he were king or slave.

"She said, she formed a godlike tongue,
  Which lofty thoughts unsheathed,
Which rolled its thunder round, and purged
  The air the nations breathed.

"She said, that tongue, all eloquent,
  With silent dust did mate.
Whereon false friends betrayed long faith,
  And foes outspat their hate.

"She said, she warmed a student's heart,
  But heart and brow 'gan fade.
Alas, alas! those Delphic trees
  Do cast an upas shade!

She said, she lighted happy hearths,
  Whose mirth was all forgot.
She said, she tunèd marriage bells,
  Which rang when love was *not*.

"She said, her name was Life, and then
  Out laughed and wept aloud,—
What time the other being strange
  Lifted the veiling shroud.

"Yea! lifted she the veiling shroud,
  And breathed the icy breath;
Whereat, with inward shuddering,
  I knew *her* name was Death.

"Yea! lifted she her calm, calm brow,
  Her clear cold smile on me;
Whereat within my deepness, leaped
  Mine immortality.

"She told me, it did move her smile,
  To witness how I sighed,
Because that what was fragile brake,
  And what was mortal died;

"As if that kings could grasp the earth,
  Who from its dust began;
As if that suns could shine at night,
  Or glory dwell with man.

"She told me, she had freed *his* soul,
  Who aye did freedom love;
Who now recked not, were worms below,
  Or ranker worms above!

"She said, the student's heart had beat
  Against its prison dim;
Until she crushed the bars of flesh,
  And poured truth's light on him.

"She said, that they who left the hearth,
  For aye in sunshine dwell;
She said, the funeral tolling brought
  More joy than marriage bell!

"And as she spake, she spake less loud;
  The stream resounded more:
Anon I nothing heard but waves,
  That wailed along the shore."

And what didst thou say, O my soul,
  Upon that mystic strife?
"I said, that Life was only Death,
  That only Death was Life."

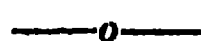


EARTH

How beautiful is earth! my starry thoughts
Look down on it from their unearthly sphere,
And sing symphonious—Beautiful is earth!
The lights and shadows of her myriad hills,
The branching greenness of her myriad woods;
Her sky-affecting rocks, her zoning sea;
Her rushing, gleaming cataracts, her streams
That race below, the wingèd clouds on high,
Her pleasantness of vale and meadow!—
                                                                Hush!
  Meseemeth through the leafy trees to ring
A chime of bells to falling waters tuned,
Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus, out of breath
With running up the hills, and shakes his hair
From off his gleesome forehead, bold and glad
With keeping blythe Dan Phœbus company,—
And throws him on the grass, though half afraid,
First glancing round, lest tempests should be nigh,
And lays close to the ground his ruddy lips,
And shapes their beauty into sound, and calls
On all the petalled flowers, that sit beneath
In hiding places from the rain and snow,
To loosen the hard soil, and leave their cold
Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.
They straightway hear his voice—

                                    * *   A thought did come,
And press from out my soul the heathen dream.
Mine eyes were purgèd. Straightway did I bind
Round me the garment of my strength, and heard
Nature's death shrieking—the hereafter cry,
When he o' the lion voice, the rainbow-crowned,
Shall stand upon the mountains and the sea,

And swear by earth, by Heaven's throne, and Him
Who sitteth on the throne, there shall be time
No more, no more! Then, veiled Eternity
Shall straight unveil her awful countenance
Unto the reeling worlds, and take the place
Of seasons, years, and ages. Aye and aye
Shall be the time of day. The wrinkled heaven
Shall yield her silent sun, made blind and white
With an exterminating light: the wind,
Unchainèd from the poles, nor having charge
Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing wail
Shall rush among the stars, and swoon to death.
Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing livid pale
Beneath the red-tongued flame, shall shudder by
From out her ancient place, and leave—a void.
Yet haply by that void the saints redeemed
May sometimes stray; when memory of sin
Ghost-like shall rise upon their holy souls;
And on their lips shall lie the name of earth
In paleness and in silentness; until
Each looking on his brother, face to face,
And bursting into sudden happy tears,
(The only tears undried) shall murmur—"Christ!"



THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSHURST.

They spoke unto me from the silent ground,
They looked unto me from the pictured wall:
The echo of my footstep was a sound
Like to the echo of their own footfall,
What time their living feet were in the hall.
I breathed where they had breathed—and where they brought
Their souls to moralise on glory's pall,
I walked with silence in a cloud of thought:
So, what they erst had learned, I mine own spirit taught.

Ay! with mine eyes of flesh, I did behold
The likeness of their flesh! They, the great dead,
Stood still upon the canvas, while I told
The glorious memories to their ashes wed.

There, I beheld the Sidneys—he, who bled
Freely for freedom's sake, bore gallantly
His soul upon his brow,—he, whose lute said
Sweet music to the land, meseemed to be
Dreaming with that pale face, of love and Arcadie.

Mine heart had shrinèd these. And therefore past
Where these, and such as these, in mine heart's pride,
Which deemed death, glory's other name. At last
I stayed my pilgrim feet, and paused beside
A picture,* which the shadows half did hide.
The form was a fair woman's form; the brow
Brightly between the clustering curls espied,
The cheek a little pale, yet seeming so
As if the lips could speak, the paleness soon would go.

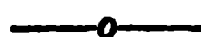
And rested there the lips, so warm and loving,
That, they *could* speak, one might be fain to guess
Only they had been much too bright, if moving,
To stay by their own will, all motionless
One outstretched hand its marble seal 'gan press
On roses which looked fading; while the eyes,
Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,
Seemed busy with their flowery destinies,
Drawing, for ladye's heart, some moral quaint and wise

She perished like her roses. I did look
On her, as she did look on them—to sigh!
Alas, alas! that the fair written book
Of her sweet face should be in death laid by,
As any blotted scroll! Its cruelty
Poisoned a heart most gentle pulsed of all,
And turned it unto song, therein to die:
For grief's stern tension maketh musical,
Unless the strained string break, or ere the music fall.

Worship of Waller's heart! no dream of thine
Revealed unto thee, that the lowly one,
Who sate enshadowed near thy beauty's shine,
Should, when the light was out, the life was done,

* Vandyke's portrait of Waller's Sacharissa.

Record thy name with those by Memory won
From Time's eternal burial. I am wooed
By wholesome thoughts this sad thought hath begun,
For mind is strengthened when awhile subdued,
As he who touched the earth, and rose with power renewed.



TO A POET'S CHILD.

A FAR harp swept the sea above;
A far voice said thy name in love:
Then silence on the harp was cast;
The voice was chained—the love went last!

And as I heard the melodie,
Sweet voicèd Fancy spake of thee:
And as the silence o'er it came,
Mine heart, in silence, sighed thy name

I thought there was one only place,
Where thou couldst lift thine orphaned face:
A little home for prayer and woe,—
A stone above—a shroud below,—

That evermore, that stone beside,
Thy withered joys would form thy pride;
As palm-trees, on their South Sea bed,
Make islands with the flowers they shed.

Child of the Dead! my dream of thee
Was sad to tell, and dark to see;
And vain as many a brighter dream;
Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream!

For here, amid the worldly crowd,
'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,
And hollow words, and feelings sere,
Child of the Dead! I meet thee here!

And is thy step so fast and light?
And is thy smile so gay and bright?
And *canst* thou smile, with cheek undim,
Upon a world that frowned on *him*?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier;
What doth the minstrel's orphan here?
The loving moulders in the clay;
The loved,—she keepeth holiday!

'Tis well! I would not doom thy years
Of golden prime, to only tears.
Fair girl! 'twere better that thine eyes
Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate.
Be happy; strive not to be great;
And go not, from thy kind apart,
With lofty soul and stricken heart.

Think not too deeply: shallow thought,
Like open rills, is ever sought
By light and flowers; while fountains deep
Amid the rocks and shadows sleep.

Feel not too warmly; lest thou be
Too like Cyrene's waters free,
Which burn at night, when all around
In darkness and in chill is found.

Touch not the harp to win the wreath:
Its tone is fame, its echo death!
The wreath may like the laurel grow,
Yet turns to cypress on the brow!

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,
Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light;
So genius (fatal gift!) is doomed
To leave the heart it fired, consumed.

For thee, for thee, thou orphaned one,
I make an humble orison!
Love all the world; and ever dream
That all are true who truly seem.

Forget! for, so, 'twill move thee not,
Or lightly move; to be forgot!
Be streams thy music; hills, thy mirth;
Thy chiefest light, the household hearth

So, when grief plays her natural part,
And visiteth thy quiet heart;
Shall all the clouds of grief be seen
To show a sky of hope between.

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,
No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise;
But gentle eyes shall weep at will,
Such tears as hearts like thine distil.



MINSTRELSY.

"One asked her once the resun why
She hadde delyte in minstrelsie,
She answered on this manere."
ROBERT DE BRUNNE.

For ever, since my childish looks
Could rest on Nature's pictured books;
For ever, since my childish tongue
Could name the themes our bards have sung;
So long, the sweetness of their singing
Hath been to me a rapture bringing!—
Yet ask me not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

I know that much whereof I sing
Is shapen but for vanishing;
I know that summer's flower and leaf
And shine and shade are very brief,

And that the heart they brighten, may,
Before them all, be sheathed in clay!—
I do not know the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

A few there are, whose smile and praise
My minstrel hope would kindly raise
But, of those few—Death may impress
The lips of some with silentness,
While some may friendship's faith resign,
And heed no more a song of mine.—
Ask not, ask not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

The sweetest song that minstrels sing,
Will charm not Joy to tarrying,
The greenest bay that earth can grow
Will shelter not in burning woe
A thousand voices will not cheer,
When *one* is mute that are is dear!
Is there, alas! *no* reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy?

I do not know! The turf is green
Beneath the rain's fast dropping sheen,
Yet asks not why that deeper hue
Doth all its tender leaves renew,—
And I, like minded, am content,
While music to my soul is sent,
To question not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

Years pass—my life with them shall pass
And soon, the crickets in the grass,
And summer bird, shall louder sing
Than she who owns a minstrel's string.
Oh, then may some, the dear and few,
Recall her love, whose truth they knew,
When all forget to question why
She had delight in minstrelsy!

TO THE MEMORY OF

SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART.

FAREWELL!—a word that human lips bestow
On all that human hearts delight to know
On summer skies, and scenes that change as fast;
On ocean calms, and faith as fit to last,
On Life, from Love's own arms that breaks away;
On hopes that blind, and glories that decay!

And ever thus, "farewell, farewell," is said,
As round the hills of lengthening time we tread,
As at each step the winding ways unfold
Some untried prospect which obscures the old,—
Perhaps a prospect brightly coloured o'er,
Yet not with brightness that we loved before;
And dull and dark the brightest hue appears
To eyes like ours, surcharged and dim with tears.
Oft, oft we wish the winding road were past,
And yon supernal summit gained at last,
Where all that gradual change removed, is found
At once, for ever, as you look around,
Where every scene by tender eyes surveyed,
And lost and wept for, to their gaze is spread—
No tear to dim the sight, no shade to fall,
But Heaven's own sunshine lighting, charming all

Farewell!—a common word—and yet how drear
And strange it soundeth as I write it here!
How strange that *thou* a place of death shouldst fill,
Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart grown chill!
And dark the eye, whose pausive glance to draw,
Incited Nature brake her tyrant's law!
And deaf the ear, to charm whose organ true,
Mœonian Music tuned her harp anew!
And mute the lips where Plato's bee hath roved,
And motionless the hand that genius moved!—
Ah, friend! thou speakest not!—but still to me
Do Genius, Music, Nature, speak of *thee*!—

Still golden fancy, still the sounding line,
And waving wood, recall some word of thine:
Some word, some look, whose living light is o'er—
And Memory sees what Hope can see no more.

Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken. Twice there came
To us a change, a joy—to thee, a fame!
Thou spakest once,* and every pleasant sight,
Woods waving wild, and fountains gushing bright,
Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the dyes
Of shade and sunshine gleamed before our eyes.
Thou spakest twice;† and every pleasant sound
Its ancient silken harmony unwound,
From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that lay
Enclasped in hands whose cunning is decay;
And now no more thou speakest! Death hath met
And won thee to him! Oh, remembered yet!
We cannot *see*, and *hearken*, and forget!

My thoughts are far. I think upon the time,
When Foxley's purple hills and woods sublime
Were thrilling at thy step; when thou didst throw
Thy burning spirit on the vale below,
To bathe its sense in beauty. Lovely ground!
There, never more shall step of thine resound!
There, Spring again shall come, but find thee not,
And deck with humid eyes her favourite spot;
Strew tender green on paths thy foot forsakes,
And make that fair, which Memory saddest makes.
For me, all sorrowful, unused to raise
A minstrel song and dream not of thy praise,
Upon thy grave my tuneless harp I lay,
Nor try to sing what only tears can say.
So warm and fast the ready waters swell—
So weak the faltering voice, thou knewest well!
Thy words of kindness calmed that voice before;
Now, thoughts of *them* but make it tremble more;
And leave its theme to others, and depart
To dwell within the silence where thou art.

* Essay on the Picturesque.
† Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient Languages.

THE AUTUMN.

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
And turn your eyes around,
Where waving woods and waters wild
Do hymn an autumn sound.
The summer sun is faint on them—
The summer flowers depart—
Sit still—as all transformed to stone,
Except your musing heart.

How there you sat in summer time,
May yet be in your mind;
And how you heard the green woods sing
Beneath the freshening wind.
Though the same wind now blows around,
You would its blast recall;
For every breath that stirs the trees
Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth
That flesh and dust impart;
We cannot bear its visitings,
When change is on the heart.
Gay words and jests may make us smile,
When Sorrow is asleep;
But other things must make us smile,
When Sorrow bids us *weep!*

The dearest hands that clasp our hands,—
Their presence may be o'er;
The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more!
Youth fades, and then, the joys of youth,
Which once refreshed our mind,
Shall come—as, on those sighing woods,
The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind—view not the woods;
Look out o'er vale and hill.
In spring, the sky encircled them—
The sky is round them still.

Come autumn's scathe—come winter's cold—
Come change—and human fate!
Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth bound,
Can ne'er be desolate.



THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA DEL RIEGO.

——"Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
Parlerà il mio morire,
E ti dirà la morte il mio martire."

GUARINI.

THE room was darkened; but a wan lamp shed
Its light upon a half-uncurtained bed,
Whereon the widowed sate. Blackly as death
Her veiling hair hung round her, and no breath
Came from her lips to motion it. Between
Its parted clouds, the calm fair face was seen
In a snow paleness, and snow silentness,
With eyes unquenchable, whereon did press
A little, their white lids, so taught to lie,
By weights of frequent tears wept secretly.
Her hands were clasped and raised—the lamp did fling
A glory on her brow's meek suffering.

Beautiful form of woman! seeming made
Alone to shine in mirrors, there to braid
The hair and zone the waist—to garland flowers—
To walk like sunshine through the orange bowers—
To strike her land's guitar—and often see
In other eyes how lovely hers must be.
Grew she acquaint with anguish? Did she sever
For ever from the one she loved, for ever,
To dwell among the strangers? Ay! and she,
Who shone most brightly in that festive glee,
Sate down in this despair most patiently.

Some hearts are Niobes! in grief's down-sweeping,
They turn to very stone from over-weeping,
And after, feel no more. Hers did remain
In life, which is the power of feeling pain,

Till pain consumed the life so called below.
She heard that he was dead!—she asked not how—
For *he* was dead! She wailed not o'er his urn,
For *he* was dead—and in *her* hands, should burn
His vestal flame of honour radiantly,
Sighing would dim its light—she did not sigh.

She only died. They laid her in the ground,
Whereon th' unloving tread, and accents sound
Which are not of her Spain. She left behind,
For those among the strangers who were kind
Unto the poor heart broken, her dark hair.
It once was gauded out with jewels rare;
It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie
Beside me, (thank the giver) droopingly,
And very long and bright! Its tale doth go
Half to the dumb grave, half to life time woe,
Making the heart of man, if manly, ring
Like Dodonæan brass, with echoing.



TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE.

Victoire! I knew thee in thy land,
  Where I was strange to all:
I heard thee; and were strange to me
  The words thy lips let fall.

I loved thee—for the Babel curse
  Was meant not for the heart:
I parted from thee, in such way
  As those who love may part.

And now a change hath come to us,
  A sea doth rush between!
I do not know if we can be
  Again as we have been.

I sit down in mine English land,
  Mine English hearth beside;
And thou, to one I never knew,
  Art plighted for a bride.

It will not wrong thy present joy,
  With bygone days to wend;
Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth,
  To love my Gallic friend.

Bind, bind the wreath! the slender ring
  Thy wedded fingers press!
May he who calls thy love his own,
  Call so thine happiness!

Be he Terpander to thine heart,
  And string fresh strings of gold,
Which may outgive new melodies,
  But never mar the old!

And though I clasp no more thy hand
  In my hand, and rejoice—
And though I see thy face no more,
  And hear no more thy voice—

Farewell, farewell!—let thought of me
  Visit thine heart! There is
In mine the very selfish prayer
  That prayeth for thy bliss!



TO A BOY.

When my last song was said for thee,
Thy golden hair swept, long and free,
Around thee; and a dove like tone
Was on thy voice—or Nature's own:
And every phrase and word of thine
Went out in lispings infantine!
Thy small steps faltering round our hearth—
Thine een out-peering in thy mirth—
Blue een! that, like thine heart, seemed given
To be, for ever, full of heaven!
Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee,
When my last song was said for thee?

And now more years are finishèd,—
For thee another song is said.
Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone;
The lisping of thy words is gone:
Thy step treads firm--thine hair not flings
Round thee its length of golden rings—
Departed, like all lovely things!
Yet art thou still made up of glee,
When my *now* song is said for thee.

Wisely and well responded they,
Who cut thy golden hair away,
What time I made the bootless prayer,
That they should pause awhile, and spare.
They said, "its sheen did less agree
With boyhood than with infancy."
And thus I know it aye must be.
Before the revel noise is done,
The revel lamps pale one by one.

Ay! Nature loveth not to bring
Crowned victims to life's labouring.
The mirth-effulgent eye appears
Less sparkling—to make room for tears:
After the heart's quick throbs depart,
We lose the gladness of the heart:
And, after we have lost awhile
The rose o' the lip, we lose its smile,
As Beauty could not bear to press
Near the death-pyre of Happiness

This seemeth but a sombre dream?
It hath more pleasant thoughts than seem
The older a young tree doth grow,
The deeper shade it sheds below;
But makes the grass more green—the air
More fresh, than had the sun been there
And thus our human life is found,
Albeit a darkness gathers round:
For patient virtues, that their light
May shine to all men, want the night:

And holy Peace, unused to cope,
Sits meekly at the tomb of Hope,
Saying that "she is risen!"

Then I
Will sorrow not at destiny,—
Though from thine eyes, and from thine heart,
The glory of their light depart;
Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,
Should come a fiercer change than now;
Though thou no more be made of glee,
When my next song is said for thee.



REMONSTRANCE.

Oh, say not it is vain to weep
  That deafened bier above;
Where genius has made room for death,
  And life is past from love;
That tears can never his bright looks
  And tender words restore:
I know it is most vain to weep—
  And therefore weep the more!

Oh, say not I shall cease to weep
  When years have withered by;
That ever I shall speak of joy,
  As if he could reply;
That ever mine unquivering lips
  Shall name the name he bore:
I know that I may cease to weep,
  And therefore weep the more!

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,
  Will leave to me my woe;
And woe's own stony strength shall chain
  These tears' impassioned flow:

Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,
May life to death restore,
For then my soul were wept away,
And I should weep no more!

Reply

To weep awhile beside the bier,
Whereon his ashes lie,
Is well!—I know that rains must fall
When clouds are in the sky
I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud
The brightest spirit o'er,
And yet, wouldst *thou* for ever weep,
When *he* can weep no more?

Fix not thy sight, so long and fast,
Upon the shroud's despair,
Look upward unto Zion's hill,
For death was also *there!*
And think, "The death, the scourge, the scorn
My sinless Saviour bore—
The curse—the pang, too deep for tears—
That *I* should weep no more!"



EPITAPH.

Beauty, who softly walkest all thy days
In silken garment to the tunes of praise,—
Lover, whose dreamings by the green-banked river,
Where once she wandered, fain would last for ever;—
King, whom the nations scan, adoring scan,
And shout "a god," when sin hath marked thee man;—
Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew remains,
Albeit the fever burneth in the veins,—
Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood is hot;—
Sceptic, who doubting, wouldst be doubted not;—
Man, whosoe'er thou art, whate'er thy trust;—
Respect thyself in me;—thou treadest *dust*.

THE IMAGE OF GOD.

"I am God, and there is none like me."
ISAIAH xlvi. 9.
"Christ, who is the image of God."
2 CORINTHIANS iv. 4.

THOU! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of the glorious sun)
Thou high unwearied one,
Whose course in heat, and light, and life is run?

Eagles may view thy face—clouds can assuage
Thy fiery wrath—the sage
Can mete thy stature—thou shalt fade with age.
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of the bounteous earth)
O thou, who givest birth
To forms of beauty and to sounds of mirth?

In all thy glory works the worm decay—
Thy golden harvests stay
For seed and toil—thy power shall pass away.
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of my deathless soul)
O thou, whose musings roll
Above the thunder, o'er creation's whole?

Thou art not. Sin, and shame, and agony
Within thy deepness lie
They utter forth their voice in thee, and cry,
"*Thou* art not like to God."

Then art THOU like to God;
Thou, who didst bear the sin, and shame, and woe—
O Thou, whose sweat did flow—
Whose tears did gush—whose brow was dead and low?

No grief is like Thy grief; no heart can prove
Love like unto Thy love;
And none, save only Thou,—below, above,—
O God, is like to God!

THE APPEAL.

Children of our England! stand
On the shores that girt our land,
The ægis of whose cloud white rock
Braveth Time's own battle-shock.
Look above the wide, wide world,
Where the northern blasts have furle
Their numbèd wings amid the snows
Muttering in a forced repose—
Or where the maddened sun on high
Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
Till within their prison sere,
Chainèd earthquakes groan for fear!
Look above the wide, wide world,
Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurled
To astonied Life, and where
Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,
On making the arena bare
Shout aloud the words that show
Jesus in the sands and snow,—
Shout aloud the words that free,
Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep
Avalanche from Alpine steep,
So the spoken word shall roll
Fear and darkness from the soul.
Are ye men, and love not man?
Love ye, and permit his ban?
Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain
Wrought of common joy and pain,
Clasping with its links of gold,
Man to man in one strong hold?

Lo! if the golden links ye sever,
Ye shall make your heart's flesh quiver
And wheresoe'er the links are reft,
There, shall be a blood-stain left
To earth's remotest rock repair,
Ye shall find a vulture there:
Though for others sorrowing not,
Your own tears shall still be hot:
Though ye play a lonely part,
Though ye bear an iron heart;—
Woe, like Echetus, still must
Grind your iron into dust.

But, children of our Britain, ye
Rend not man's chain of sympathy;
To those who sit in woe and night,
Denying tears and hiding light.
Ye have stretched your hands abroad
With the Spirit's sheathless sword:
Ye have spoken—and the tone
To earth's extremest verge hath gone:
East and west sublime it rolls,
Echoed by a million souls!
The wheels of rapid circling years,
Erst hot with crime, are quenched in tears
Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
That were chained in stone before:
Bloody hands, that only bare
Hilted sword, are clasped in prayer
Savage tongues, that wont to fling
Shout of war in deathly ring,
Speak the name which angels sing.
Dying lips are lit the while
With a most undying smile,
Which reposing there, instead
Of language, when the lips are dead,
Saith,—"No sound of grief or pain
Shall haunt us when we move again."

Children of our country! brothers
To the children of all others!

Shout aloud the words that show
Jesus in the sands and snow;—
Shout aloud the words that free,
Over the perpetual sea!

IDOLS.

How weak the gods of this world are—
And weaker yet their worship made me!
I have been an idolater
Of three—and three times they betrayed me!

Mine oldest worshipping was given
To natural Beauty, aye residing
In bowery earth and starry heaven,
In ebbing sea, and river gliding.

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
To what the natural feelings tell!
Albeit I sighed, the trees would blossom—
Albeit I smiled, the blossoms fell.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
Amid a grove of name divine,
Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
And Moloch Fame hath reared a shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflection;
On rocky beds those waters lie;
That grove hath chillness and dejection—
How could I sing? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, my Lares greeting,
To rest and warmth I vowed my years.
To rest? how wild my pulse is beating!
To warmth? ah me! my burning tears.

Ay, *they* may burn—though thou be frozen
By death, and changes wint'ring on!
Fame!—Beauty!—idols madly chosen—
Were yet of gold; but *thou* art STONE!

Crumble like stone! my voice no longer
Shall wail their names, who silent be.
There is a voice that soundeth stronger—
"My daughter, give thine heart to *Me*."

Lord! take mine heart! O first and fairest,
Whom all creation's ends shall hear;
Who deathless love in death declarest!
None else is beauteous—famous—dear!



HYMN.

"Lord, I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me."
PSALM cxli.
"The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him."
PSALM cxlv.

SINCE without Thee we do no good,
And with Thee do no ill,
Abide with us in weal and woe,—
In action and in will.

In weal,—that while our lips confess
The Lord who "gives," we may
Remember, with an humble thought,
The Lord who "takes away."

In woe,—that while to drowning tears
Our hearts their joys resign,
We may remember *who* can turn
Such water into wine.

By hours of day,—that when our feet
O'er hill and valley run,
We still may think the light of truth
More welcome than the sun.

By hours of night,—that when the air
Its dew and shadow yields,
We still may hear the voice of God
In silence of the fields.

Oh! then sleep comes on us like death,
  All soundless, deaf, and deep:
Lord! teach us so to watch and pray,
  That death may come like sleep.

Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,
  While flesh and soul agree;
And when our flesh is only dust,
  Abide our souls with *Thee*.



WEARINESS.

Mine eyes are weary of surveying
The fairest things, too soon decaying;
Mine ears are weary of receiving
The kindest words—ah, past believing!
Weary my hope, of ebb and flow,
Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe:
My trusting heart is weariest!
I would—I would, I were at rest!

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade?
For *me*, can words be faithful made?
Will *my* embittered hope be sweet?
My pulse forego the human beat?
No! Darkness must consume mine eye—
Silence, mine ear—hope cease—pulse die—
And o'er mine heart a stone be pressed—
Or vain this,—"Would I were at rest!"

There is a land of rest deferred:
Nor eye hath seen nor ear hath heard,
Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o'er;
For hope beheld is hope no more!
There, human pulse forgets its tone—
There, hearts may know as they are known!
Oh for dove's wings, thou dwelling blest,
To fly to *thee*, and be at rest!

Translations.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS. — HEPHÆSTUS.
OCEANUS. — IO, *daughter of Inachus.*
HERMES. — STRENGTH AND FORCE.
Chorus of Ocean Nymphs.

SCENE.—STRENGTH AND FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS, *and* PROMETHEUS *at the Rocks.*

Strength. We reach the utmost limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without man,—
And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs fulfil
The mandate of our father, and, with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
Fasten against this beetling precipice,
This guilty god! Because he filched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin,
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
And learn free service to the rule of Zeus,
And leave disused his trick of loving man.
Hephæstus. O Strength and Force,—for you, our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing.—No more!—but *I*,
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm,
To fix with violent hands a kindred god.
Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it,—and our Zeus command
With word as heavy as bolts—inevitable!
Ho!—lofty son of Themis, who is sage,
Thee loth, I loth, must rivet fast in chains
Against this rocky height unclomb by man,
Where never human voice nor face shall find

Out thee, who lov'st them!—where thy beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away,
And night come up with garniture of stars
To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun
Disperse, with retrickt beams, the morning-frosts;
And through all changes, sense of present woe
Shall vex thee sore, because, with none of them
There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked
From love of man!—for in that thou, a god,
Didst brave the wrath of gods, and give away
Undue respect to mortals; for that crime
Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock,
Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,
And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air! For Zeus is stern,
And new-made kings are cruel.
Strength. Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate?—one, too, who betrayed
Thy glory unto men?
Hephæstus. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.
Strength. Grant it be;
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not more for *that*?
Hephæstus. *Thou*, at least, art a stern one! ever bold!
Strength. Why, if I wept, it were no remedy!
And do not *thou* spend labour on the air
To bootless uses.
Hephæstus. Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!
Strength. Why hate
Thy craft, most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?
Hephæstus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!
Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none free
Except King Zeus.
Hephæstus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.
Strength. Why not, then,

Make haste, and bind the fetters over HIM,
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging.
Hephæstus. Here be chains—
Zeus may behold these.
Strength. Seize him,—strike amain!
Strike with the hammer on each side his bands—
Rivet him to the rock.
Hephæstus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.
Strength. Still faster grapple him,—
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no inch to stir!
He's terrible for finding a way out
Where others could not.
Hephæstus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.
Strength. Now, then, clench along
The other strongly. Let the sophist learn
He's duller than our Zeus.
Hephæstus. Oh, none but HE
Accuse me justly!
Strength. Now, straight through the chest,
Take him and bite him with the clenching tooth
Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet him.
Hephæstus. Alas, Prometheus! what thou sufferest here,
I sorrow over.
Strength. Dost thou shrink again,
And breathe groans for the enemies of Zeus?
Beware, lest thine own pity find thee out.
Hephæstus. Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity.
Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.
But lash the thongs about his sides.
Hephæstus. So much
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.
Strength. Ay, but I *will* urge!—and, with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry! Get thee down,
And ring amain the iron round his legs!
Hephæstus. That work was not long doing.
Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant gyves!
For he who rates the work has a heavy hand.

Hephæstus. Thy speech is savage as thy shape.
Strength. Be *thou*
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untruckling hate.
Hephæstus. Let us go! He is netted round with chains.
Strength. Here now, taunt on! and, having spoiled the gods
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out! Why, how could *they*
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs?
Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name,
Prometheus, which means Providence,—because
Thou dost thyself require a providence,
To escape the crushing of this rolling Doom.
Prometheus alone. O holy Æther, and swift-winged Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter infinite
Of yon Sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you!—
Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!
Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of Time!
Behold how, fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones sublime
Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and bound me!
Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's
I cover with one groan! And where is found me
A limit to these sorrows?
And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown
Clearly all things that should be—nothing done,
Comes sudden to my soul—and I must bear
What is ordained with patience, being aware
Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave
In silence or in speech. Because I gave
Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate! Because I stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went
Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,
That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky!

Ah, ah me! what a sound,
What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,—
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,
To have sight of my pangs,—or some guerdon obtain—
Lo! a god in the anguish, a god in the chain!
The god Zeus hateth sore,
And his gods hate again,
As many as trod on his glorified floor,—
Because I loved mortals too much evermore
Alas me! what a murmur and motion I hear,
As of birds flying near!
And the air undersings
The soft stroke of their wings—
And all life that approaches, I wait for in fear

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe

Fear nothing! our troop
Floats lovingly up,
With a quick-oaring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock;
Having softened the soul of our father below!
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,-
And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,
Smote down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—
Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste to behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me! – alas me!
Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at her breast
Many children; and eke of Oceanus,- he,
Who coils around earth with perpetual unrest;
Behold me, and see
How, transfixed with the fang
Of a fetter, I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now, yet now,
A terrible cloud, whose rain is tears,
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible chains!
For new is the hand and the rudder that steers
The ship of Olympus through surge and wind—
And of old things passed, no track is behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under Hades,
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown!
I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
In the knotted chain, with the savage clang,
All into the dark, where there should be none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh and see!
But now the winds sing through and shake
The hurtled chains wherein I hang,—
And I, in my naked sorrows, make
Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2nd Strophe.

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so stern,
As to use thy woe for a root of mirth?
Who would not turn more mild to learn
Thy sorrows? who of the heaven and earth,
Save Zeus? But he,
Right wrathfully
Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,
And rules thereby the heavenly seed;
Nor will he cease, till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished deed;
Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hardy captured government.

Prometheus. Yet even of *me* he shall have need,
That monarch of the blessed seed;

Of me, of me, who now am cursed
  Beneath his fetters dire!
To wring my secret out withal,
  And learn by whom his sceptre shall
Be filched from him—as was, at first,
    His heavenly fire!
Yet he never shall enchant me
  With his honey-lipped persuasion;
Never, never shall he daunt me
  With the oath and threat of passion,
Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,
  And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow, by his pain.

Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
  And, for all thou hast borne
From the stroke of the rod,
  Nought relaxest from scorn!
But thou speakest unto me
  Too free and unworn—
And a terror strikes through me,
  And festers my soul,—
  And I fear, in the roll
Of the storm, for thy fate,
  In the ship far from shore—
Since the son of Saturnius is hard in his hate,
  And unmoved in his heart evermore.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is stern!
I know he metes his justice by his will!
And yet, I also know his soul shall learn
More softness when once broken by this ill,—
That, curbing his unconquerable wrath,
He shall rush on in fear, to meet with me
Who rush to meet with him, in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all things, and relate
The story to us!—of what crime accused,
Zeus smites thee with dishonourable pangs.
Speak! if to teach us do not grieve thyself.

Prometheus. The utterance of these things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence! each way lies
Woe strong as fate!—
When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry brows,—
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his throne,
That Zeus might king it there; and some in haste
With opposite oaths that they would have no Zeus
To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought
The counsel I thought meetest, could not move
The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,—
Because, disdaining in their rugged souls
My subtle machinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
Who is called not only Themis, but Earth too,
(Her single beauty joys in many names)
Did teach me, with reiterant prophecy,
What future should be,—and how conquering gods
Should not prevail by strength and violence,
But by guile only. When I told them so,
They would not deign to contemplate the truth
On all sides round;—and thus, I deemed it best
To lead my mother upwards, willingly,
And set my Themis face to face with Zeus,
As willing to receive her! Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding hosts;
And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
Hath recompensed me by these bitter pangs—
For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—
To have no faith in friends. And then, ye ask
What crime it is for which he tortures me—
It shall be clear before you. When at first
He filled his father's throne, he made direct
And various gifts of glory to the gods,
And dealt the empire out. Alone, of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,
But yearned to sweep their track off from the world,
And plant a newer race there! And was none
Resisted that desire except myself!

I dared it! *I* drew mortals back to light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell,—
And, for that wrong, I bow down in these pangs,
Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,—
And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
Unworthy pity,—while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
That strikes me thus!—a sight that shames your Zeus!
Chorus. Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
To fly this sight—and, now I gaze on it,
I sicken inwards.
Prometheus. To my friends, indeed,
I must be a sad sight.
Chorus. And didst thou sin
No more than so?
Prometheus. I did restrain, besides,
My mortals from premeditating death.
Chorus. How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?
Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.
Chorus. By that gift, thou didst help thy mortals well.
Prometheus. I gave them also,—fire.
Chorus. And have they now,
Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?
Prometheus. They have! and shall learn by it, many arts.
Chorus. And, truly, for such sins Zeus tortures thee,
And will relax no anguish? Canst behold
No limit to thy wrestling agony?
Prometheus. No other! only what seems good to HIM.
Chorus. And how will it seem good? what hope remains?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? And that thou hast sinned
It glads me not to speak of, and grieves *thee*—
Then let it pass from both! and seek thyself
Some outlet from despair.
Prometheus. It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from pain
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have seen
All in prevision!—By my choice, my choice,
I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—

And helping mortals, found mine own despair!
I did not think, indeed, that I should pine
Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,—
Doomed to this drear hill and no neighbouring
Of any life!—but mourn not *ye* for griefs
I bear to-day!—drop rather to the plain,
And hear how other woes creep on to me,
And learn the consummation of my doom.
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you!—grieve for me,
Who am now grieving!—for grief walks the earth,
And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash of thy words,
Prometheus, and obey!
And I spring with a rapid foot away
From the rushing car, and the holy air
The track of birds—
And I drop to the rugged ground, and there
Await the tale of thy despair.

Enter OCEANUS.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of my weary road,
Where I could see and answer thee,
Prometheus, in thine agony!
On the back of the quick-winged bird I glode,
And I bridled him in
With the will of a god,—
And know, thy sorrow aches in me,
Constrained by the force of kin.
Nay, though that tie were all undone,
For the life of none beneath the sun
Would I seek a larger benison,
Than I seek for thine!—
And thou shalt learn my words are truth,—
That no fair parlance of the mouth
Grows falsely out of mine!
Then give me a deed to prove my faith,—
For no faster friend is named in breath,
Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

Prometheus. Ha! what has brought thee? Hast thou also come
To look upon my woe? How hast thou dared
To leave the depths called after thee, the caves

Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,
To visit Earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come indeed to view my doom, and mourn
That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on, and see
How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—how I,
The erector of the empire in his hand,—
Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair!

Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold,—and I would fain
Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,—
To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,
And take new softness to thy manners, since
A new king rules the gods. If words like these,
Harsh words and sharp ones, thou wilt fling abroad,
Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
May hear thee do it; and so this wrath of his,
Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear
A mere child's sport at vengeance! Wretched god,
Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,
And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem
To address thee with old saws and outworn sense,—
Yet such a curse, Prometheus, waits indeed
On lips that speak too proudly!—ne'ertheless,
Thou dost not grow the meeker, nor dost yield
To evil rule the sooner,—yearning still
To swell the account of grief, with other griefs
Than what are borne! Beseech thee, use me then
For counsel! Do not spurn against the pricks,—
Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty,
And not by right. And now, I go from hence,
And will endeavour if a power of mine
Can break thy fetters through. For thee,—be calm,
And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not
Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,
That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?

Prometheus. I gratulate thee, who hast shared and dared
All things with me, except their penalty!
But now cease! leave these thoughts! It cannot be
That thou shouldst move HIM. HE may *not* be moved!
And *thou*, beware lest, this way, thou meet woe.

Oceanus. Ever thou wert more wise, for others' use,
Than for thine own: the event, and not the word,
Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,

Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back;
Because I glory—glory in this aim—
To win for thee deliverance from thy pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.

Prometheus. Why, there again
I give thee gratulation and applause!
Thou lackest no good will. But as for deeds,
Do nought! 'twere all done vainly! helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest,
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,
Meet burden for a giant! And I have seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The habitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred heads,
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand),
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,
Did flash out from his eyes a glory askance,
As if to storm the throne of Zeus! But so,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight to him,—
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,
And struck him downward from his eminence
Of boastful exaltation! Through the soul
It struck him mainly; and his strength was shrunk
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now, he lies
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length,
Beside the strait of ocean; over-ridden
By roots of Ætna,—high upon whose tops
Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing ore,
From which the great fire-rivers shall burst away
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily!—
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,—
Fallen Typhon;—howsoever struck and charred
By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for thee,
Thou art not so unlearned as to need

My teaching—let thy knowledge save thyself.
I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus's soul hath quenched its wrath.

Oceanus. Hast thou no knowledge, then, of this, Prometheus—
That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the heart,
And, where the soul is ulcerous, sear it not
With any rudeness.

Oceanus. With a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that?*
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

Prometheus. I discern
An empty wish,—and unresultive work.

Oceanus. Then let me bear the harm of punishment!
Since it most profits that the truly wise
Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And this will seem
A crime of mine.

Oceanus. In truth, thine argument
Sends me back home.

Prometheus. Because thy grief for me
Might cast thee down to hate.

Oceanus. The hate of Him,
Who sits a new king on the general throne?

Prometheus. Beware of him,—lest thine heart grieve by him.

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher!

Prometheus. Go!
Depart—beware!—and keep the mind thou hast.

Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as I rush before—
Lo! my four-footed Bird sweeps smooth and wide
The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad
To bend his knee at home, in the ocean-stall.

[*Exit* OCEANUS.

1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my restless eyes,
Drop by drop intermittently,
A trickling stream of tears supplies
My cheeks all wet from fountains free,—

Because that Zeus, the sternly bold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

1st Antistrophe.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to day!
All the mortal nations,
Having habitations
Near the holy Asia,
Are a dirge intoning
For thine honour and thy brother's,
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2nd Strophe.

Mourn the virgins, 'habitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand
In the battle's roar—
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore—

2nd Antistrophe.

And Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the lofty town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before have I seen to remain,
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan!—'twas Atlas who bears,
In a curse from the gods, by that strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoulder alone,
While he sighs up the stars!
And the ocean-tides bellow, in bursting their bars,—

Murmurs stir the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through the chasm of the ground,—
And the founts of the pure running rivers moan low
In the pathos of woe.

Prometheus Beseech you, think not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn! I only gnaw my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so wronged!
For so—their honours to these new made gods,
What other gave but I,—and shared them out
With distribution? Ay—but here I am dumb,
For here, I should repeat your knowledge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the works
I did for mortals, and how, fools before,
I made them wise and true in aim of soul!—
And I will tell you—not as taunting them,
But teaching you the intention of my gifts,
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time,
Nor knew to build a house against the sun,
With wicketed sides, nor any woodwork knew,
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground
In hollow caves unsunned There, came to them
No stedfast sign of winter, nor of spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of autumn full of fruit,—
But all things they did blindly and lawlessly,
Until I taught them how the stars do rise
And set in mystery; and devised for them
Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and beside
The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother I was first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs!
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease!
And no one else but I, achieved, beside,
The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
With linen wings! And I—oh, miserable!—
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,

Have no device left now to save myself
From the woe I suffer!

Chorus. Very shameful woe,
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense,
Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling sick,
Thou'rt faint at heart, and canst not find the drugs
Required to save thyself.

Prometheus. Harken the rest,
And marvel further—what more arts and means
I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a man
Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent,
Nor chrism, nor liquid; but, for lack of drugs,
Men pined and wasted, till I showed to them
Those mixtures of emollient remedies
Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
Discerned the vision from the common dream,
And made them wise in vocal auguries
Hard to interpret: and defined as plain
The wayside omens, – flights of crook-clawed birds,—
Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,
And which not so, and what the food of each,
And what the hates, affections, social needs,
Of all to one another; and what sign
Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,
May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so,
The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,
Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.
And for those helps of man hid underground,
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare say that he found them out
Before me? None, I know! Unless he choose
To vaunt a vain lie. Learn the whole, in brief,—
That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

Chorus. Give mortals no unseasonable help,
Neglecting thine own sorrow; since, for me,
I have hope to see thee break these fetters still,
And stand up strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus,

The oracular Fate ordains. I must be bowed
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain.
Necessity is stronger than mine art.
Chorus. Who holds the helm of that Necessity?
Prometheus. The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies
Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute than these are?
Prometheus. Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.
Chorus. What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
A king for ever?
Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.
Chorus. Perhaps
Thy secret may be holy?
Prometheus. Turn thy mind
To another matter! this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but to veil utterly
In silence still. For by that secret kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonour, and its woe.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the all-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne,
In that might of his own,
To antagonise mine!
Never let me delay
To bend on my way
To the gods of the shrine,
Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father.
Nor my sin, be it sped in the word that is said,
But my vow, be it rather
Consummated,
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

1st Antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out

With hopes that are brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit swells bold
With the joys foretold!
But I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs,
Lifelong, consumed.
And all because thou, who art fearless now,
With Zeus above,
Dost overflow, for mankind below,
With a free-souled, reverent love.

O friend, behold and see!
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?
What's all the strength?—is it strong?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers—living one day long?
And seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow,
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end?
And how no mortal wranglings can confuse
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus. I have learnt these things,
From the sorrow in thy face!
Another song did drop its wings
Upon my lips in other days,—
When round the bath, and round the bed,
The hymeneal chant instead,
I sang for thee, and smiled,—
And thou didst lead, with gifts and vows,
Hesione, my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

Io *enters.*

Io. What land is this? what people is here?
And who is he, who writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?

Now, what is the crime that hath brought thee to pain?
And what is the land—make answer free—
Which I wander through, in my wrong and fear?—
Ah! ah! ah me!
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
When my soul descries
That herdsman with the myriad eyes—
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye!
Graves hide him not, though he should die,—
But he doggeth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high—on high—
And along the sands of the siding deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound
The waters round,
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
Where shall my weary course be done?—
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's son?
And in what have I sinned, that I should go,
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for ever?
Ah! ah! dost vex me so,
That I madden and shiver,
Stung through with dread?
Flash the fire down, to burn me!
Heave the earth up, to cover me!
Or plunge me in the deep, with the salt waves over me,
Where the sea-beasts may be fed!
And, O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!
For this wandering, everlonger, evermore,
Hath overworn me,—
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-horned maiden saith?
Prometheus. How could I choose but hearken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden?—Inachus's child?—

Why lengthen out thy maiden hours, when fate
Permits the noblest spousal in the world?
For Zeus burns with the arrow of thy love,
And fain would touch thy beauty.—And for thee,—
Girl—spurn not Zeus! but fly to Lerne's mead,
That's green around thy father's flocks and stalls,
Until the passion of the heavenly eye
Be quenched in sight."—Such dreams did, all night long,
Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till I dared
To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps; whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,
And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please the gods,—
And these returning, brought back oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret. Then, at last, there came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,—
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken out.
This—"He should drive me from my home and land,
And bid me wander to the extreme verge
Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder, with a fiery eye,
Leap straight from Zeus, to burn up all his race,
To the last root of it." By which Toxean word,
Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut me out,
He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's forceful bit
Compelled him to the deed!—And instantly
My body and soul were changed and distraught,
And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along
By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
I rushed on to Kenchrea's limpid stream,
And Lerne's fountain-well. And there, the earth-born,
The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out
With countless eyes, set staring at my steps!—
An unexpected and most sudden doom
Drew him from life—but I—curse-stricken still,
Am driven from land to land before the scourge
The gods hold o'er me. So, thou hast heard the past,
And if the bitter future thou canst tell,
Speak on! I charge thee, do not flatter me

Through pity, with false words! for, in my mind,
Deceiving works more shame than torturing.

Chorus.

Hush! silence here!
Nevermore, nevermore,
Would I languish for
The stranger's word
To thrill mine ear!—
Nevermore for the wrong and the woe and the fear,
So hard to behold,
And so hard to bear,
To pierce my soul with a double edged sword,
And a sliding cold!
Ah Fate! ah me!—
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in thee, and fear too full!
Be patient till thou hast learned the rest!
Chorus. Speak—teach!—
To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,
By clear foreknowledge, to make perfect, pain.
Prometheus. The boon ye asked me first was lightly won,—
For first ye asked to hear this maiden's grief
As her own lips might tell it—now remains
To list what other sorrows she so young
Must bear from Here! Inachus's child,
O thou!—drop down thy soul, my weighty words,
And measure thence the landmarks which are set
To end thy wandering! Toward the orient sun
First turn thy face from mine, and journey on
Along the desert flats, till thou shalt come
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,
Perched in wheeled waggons under woven roofs,
And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—
Approach them not; but siding in thy course
The rugged shore-rocks sounding from the sea,
Depart that country. On the left hand dwell
The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
Of whom beware! for certes they are stern,

And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so
The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner* called),
Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
That highest of mountains,—where the river's strength
Is jutted from the heights—and thou must climb
Those mountain tops that neighbour with the stars,
And tread the southward way, and near, at last,
The Amazonian host that hateth man,
Who shall inhabit Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon where the sea's rough jaw
Doth gnash at Salmydessa, and provide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame harsh! The same shall lead thee on
With unreluctant hand till thou shalt come
Just where the ocean-gates show narrowest,
On the Cimmerian isthmus,—leaving which
Behoves thee swim with ghastly fortitude
That strait Mæotis. Ay! and evermore
That traverse shall be famous on men's lips,
That strait called Bosphorus, the hornèd one's road,
So named because of thee! Thou so wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of gods appears
Impartial in his violent deeds? For lo!
The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wanderings. Ah, fair child,
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!
For all thou yet hast heard, can only prove
The incompleted prelude of thy doom.

Io. Ah, ah!

Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?
How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

Chorus. Besides the grief thou hast told, can aught remain?

Prometheus. A sea— of foredoomed evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then? why not cast myself
Down headlong from this miserable rock,
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem
My soul from sorrow? Better once to die,
Than day by day to suffer.

Prometheus. Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my woe,

For whom it is appointed not to die,
For Death redeems from woe: and now I see
In all my far prevision, not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king.

Io. And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

Prometheus. *Thou*, methinks,
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

Io. Could I choose,
I, who endure such pangs, now, by that Zeus?

Prometheus. Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.

Io. By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand
Be emptied so?

Prometheus. Himself shall spoil himself,
Through his imprudent counsels.

Io. How? declare,
Unless the word bring evil.

Prometheus. He shall wed—
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

Io. A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out,
If it be utterable.

Prometheus. Why should I say which?
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

Io. Then
It is his wife shall tear him from his throne?

Prometheus. It is his wife shall bear a son to him,
More mighty than the father.

Io. From this doom
Hath he no refuge?

Prometheus. None—or ere that I,
Loosed from these fetters—

Io. Yea—but who shall loose thee
While Zeus is adverse?

Prometheus. One who is born of *thee*,—
It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest—
A son of mine shall loose thee from thy woe?

Prometheus. After ten generations, count three more,
And find him in the third.

Io. The oracle
Remains obscure.

Prometheus. And search it not, to learn
Thine own griefs from it.
Io. Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved.
Prometheus. I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.
Io. But which two?
Set them before me—grant me power to choose.
Prometheus. I grant it—choose—if I shall name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand
Shall save me out of mine.
Chorus. Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her who prays,
The next to me—and turn back neither prayer
Dishonoured by denial. Thus, to her,
Declare the future wandering of her feet—
Then point me to the looser of thy chain—
Because I yearn to know it.
Prometheus. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set
No contrary against it, nor keep back
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must recount thy wandering course
Far winding; as I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past
The flowing bound that parts two continents,
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire—across the roar of seas,
Fly, till thou hast reached the Gorgonæan flats
Beside Cisthene—there the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan,
One tooth between them, and a common eye,
On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the moon,
When she looks through the night. And nigh to these
The Gorgon sisters three, enclothed with wings,
And wearing snakes for curls, and man abhorred.
There is no mortal gazes in their face,
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
To guard thee from their horror. Ay! and list
Another tale of a dreadful sight! beware
The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,

Those sharp-mouthed dogs, and the Arimaspian host,
One-eyed, that moves on horseback, habiting
Beside the river that runs bright with gold,
The stream of Pluto—near them not! anon
Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe
Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Æthiops!—wind along
Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours, from the Bybline hills,
His holy and sweet wave!—his course shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground,
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine
A distant exile. Have I said, in this,
Aught darkly or incompletely?—now repeat
The question, make the knowledge full! Behold,
I have more leisure than I covet, here.

Chorus. If thou canst tell us aught that's left untold
Or loosely told of her most dreary flight,
Declare it straight! but if thou hast uttered all,
Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,
Remembering how we prayed it.

Prometheus. She has heard
The fulness of the wandering of her woe—
But that she may have knowledge not to have heard
All vainly, I will tell what she endured
Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
To prove my prescience true And so—to leave
All crowd of jostling words, and pass at once
To the first step of thy course—when thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereat the fane
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,—
And, wonder past belief, the oaks do wave
Articulate adjurations—ay, and they
Did so salute thee in no phrase perplexed,
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
Who shouldst be—(Here some sweetness took thy sense!)
Thou didst rush further onward,—stung along
The ocean-shore,—toward Rhea's mighty bay,—
And, tost back from it, were tost to it again
In stormy evolution!—and, know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea

Shall bear the name Ionian, and present
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals. These words be the sign
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her,
I will declare in common audience, nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech brake off.
There is a town Canobus, built upon
The earth's far margin, at the mouth of Nile,
And on the mound washed up by it!—Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect mind,
And only by the touch and by the stroke
Of his undreadful hand! and thou shalt bear
A dusky son to Zeus, who shall be called
Thence, Epaphus, the Touched! That son shall pluck the fruit
From all that land wide-watered by the flow
Of flooding Nile,—and, counting from his life
The fifth full generation,—which involves
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,
Their father's brother's. But they, passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,
Shall drive on, hunting on that quarry of love
They should not hunt—till envious Heaven shall lay
A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,
And Greece receive them, to be overcome
In murtherous woman-war, by fierce red hands,
Round which the night keeps watch. For every wife
Shall slay her husband, dyeing deep in blood
The sword of double edges—(now do I wish
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
The head upon her pillow, touched with love,
And blunted in her purpose, and impelled
To choose the lesser evil, and prefer
The wearing on her cheeks the coward's shame
To blood-guilt on her hands. She shall give birth
To a royal race in Argos—tedious speech
Were needed to speak clearly and at large
Of these things—'tis enough that from this seed

Shall spring the strong He—famous with the bow,
Whose arms shall break my fetters off! Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Instructed me in this oracular truth;
But how and when, I should be long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

Io. Eleleu, eleleu!
How the spasm and the pain,
And the fire on the brain,
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all aflame as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart, in its terror, is spurning my breast,—
And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot, roll round,—
I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frensy all madly inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate fate.

Chorus.—Strophe.

Oh! wisest of the wise is he
Who first within his spirit knew,
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above,
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light!

Antistrophe.

Oh! never, never may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies,
Where Zeus, upon the purple, waits!—
Nor let me step too near—too near—
To any suitor, bright from heaven—

Because I see—because I fear—
This loveless maiden vexed and laden
By this fell curse of Here,—driven
On wanderings dread and drear!

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead,
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!—
It will not hurt—I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.
And let not love, from those above,
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!
I have no sword to fight that fight—
I have no strength to tread that path—
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear,—I cannot see,
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
I can have power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus, howbeit most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness,—such a marriage rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat,
And leave no track behind! and so the curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly—no escape
From all this ruin shall the filial Zeus
Have granted to him, from one of all his gods,
Unless I teach it—I the refuge know,
And I, the means—Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand, the bolt that breathes out fire—
For these things shall not help him—none of them—
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience,—such a foe
He doth himself prepare against himself,
A wonder of unconquerable Hate,
A new deviser of a nobler fire

Than shines in lightnings, and of grander sound
Than aught the thunder rolls,—out-thundering it,—
Of power to shatter in Poseidon's fist
The trident-spear, which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,
By this destruction, lost, shall mete at length
The gulf which severs rule from servitude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled,
As, also, I desire them.

Chorus. Must we then
Look out for one to come, to master Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid to speak such words?

Prometheus. What should *I* fear, who cannot die?

Chorus. But *he*
Can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

Prometheus. Why, let him do it!—I am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

Chorus. The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,
Whenever reigning—but for me, your Zeus
Is less than nothing! Let him act and reign
His brief hour out according to his will—
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long!—
But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new made menial of the new-crowned king—
He doubtless comes to tell us something new

HERMES *enters*.

Hermes. I speak to thee, that sophist,—speaker down
Of scorn by scorn,—that sinner against gods,
That reverencer of men,— that thief of fire,—
I speak to and adjure thee! Zeus commands
Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
Is this, to move thy vaunt, and cause his fall
From absolute rule! And do not wrap thy speech
In riddles, but speak clearly! Do not cast
Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet—

Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won
To mercy by such means.
Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
In th' utterance, and full-minded in the sense,
As doth befit a servant of the gods!
New gods, ye newly reign, and think, forsooth,
Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
To take a wound there!—Have I not stood by
While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not
Behold the third, the same who rules you now,
Fall, shamed, to sudden ruin?—Do I seem
To tremble and quail before your modern gods?
I cast the thought off far!—For thee, depart,
Re-tread thy steps in haste! To all, so asked,
I answer nothing.
Hermes. 'Twas this wind of pride
That took thee of yore full sail upon these rocks.
Prometheus. I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!—
My suffering for thy service! for I hold
It is a nobler thing to serve this rock
Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus—
And thus on scorners I retort their scorn.
Hermes. It seems that thou dost glory in thy despair.
Prometheus. I, glory? would my foes did glory so,
And I stood by to see!—and naming them,
Thou art not unremembered.
Hermes. Dost thou charge
Me also with the blame of any grief?
Prometheus. I tell thee, I loathe the universal gods,
Who for the good I gave them rendered back
The ill of their injustice.
Hermes. Thou art mad—
I hear thee raving, Titan, at the full!
Prometheus If it be madness to abhor my foes,
May I be mad!
Hermes. If thou wert prosperous,
Thou wouldst be unendurable.
Prometheus. Alas!
Hermes. Zeus knows not that word.
Prometheus. But maturing time
Doth teach all things.

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not learnt
The wisdom yet, thou needest.
Prometheus. If I had,
I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.
Hermes. Thou dost vouchsafe no answer, as I think,
To the great Sire's requirements.
Prometheus. Verily
I owe him grateful service,--and should pay it.
Hermes. Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood
A child before thy face.
Prometheus. No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish child,
If thou expect that I should answer aught
Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand,
Nor any machination in the world,
Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,
These cankerous fetters from me! For the rest,
Let him now hurl his blenching lightnings down,
And with his white-winged snows, and mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders, mix all things;
Confound them in disorder! None of this
Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak
The name of his dethroner who shall come.
Hermes. Can this avail thee? Look to it!
Prometheus. Long ago
It was looked forward to—precounselled of.
Hermes. Vain god, take righteous courage!—dare for once
To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence!
Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chafe
My soul with exhortation, as the sea
Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think no more
That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,
Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,
With womanly upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains! Far from me be the thoughts!
Hermes. I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,—
For still thy heart, beneath my showers of prayers,
Lies dry and hard!—nay, leaps like a young horse
Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein,—
Still fiercest in the weakest thing of all,

Which sophism is,—for absolute will alone,
When left to its motions in perverted minds,
Is worse than null, for strength! Behold and see,
Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee! For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame,
And hide thy body where the hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm!—and when thou hast passed
A long black time within, thou shalt come out
To front the sun; and Zeus's winged hound,
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
To meet thee,—self-called to a daily feast,—
And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver! Do not look
For any end, moreover, to this curse,
Or ere some god appear, to bear thy pangs
On his own head vicarious, and descend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell,
And the deep glooms enringing Tartarus!—
Then ponder this!—the threat is not a growth
Of vain invention: it is spoken and meant!
For Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
And doth complete the utterance in the act—
So, look to it, thou!—take heed!—and nevermore
Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will!

Chorus. This Hermes suits his reasons to the times—
At least I think so!—since he bids thee drop
Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him!
When the wise err, their wisdom proves their shame.

Prometheus. Unto me the foreknower, this mandate of power,
He cries, to reveal it!
And scarce strange is my fate, if I suffer from hate,
At the hour that I feel it!
Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,
Flash, coiling me round!
While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound!

Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place
The earth rooted below,
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,
Be it driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro!
Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus— on—
To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling me down!
But he cannot join death to a fate meant for *me!*

Hermes. Why, the words that he speaks and the thoughts that he thinks,
Are maniacal - sad!
And if Fate, who hath bound him, just loosens the links,—
Yet he's nigh to be mad.
Then depart ye who groan with him,
Leaving to moan with him—
Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder, in nearing,
Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.

Chorus. Change thy speech for another, thy thought for a new,
If to move me and teach me, indeed be thy care!
For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true,
That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear.
How! couldst teach me to venture such vileness? Behold!
I *choose*, with this victim, this anguish foretold!
For I turn from the traitor in hate and disdain,—
And I know that the curse of the treason is worse
Than the pang of the chain.

Hermes. Then remember, O nymphs, what I utter before,—
Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you,
Cast the blame on your fate, and declare evermore
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow you.
Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice!—by no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom!—but by madness alone,
In the great net of Até, whence none cometh out,
Ye are wound and undone!

Prometheus. Ay! in act, now—in word, now, no more!
Earth is rocking in space!
And the thunder's crash up with a roar upon roar—
And red eddies of lightning flash fires in my face—
And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round—
And the blasts of the winds universal, leap free,

And blow each upon each, with a passion of sound,—
And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea!
Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along!
O my mother's fair glory! O Æther, enringing,
All eyes, with the sweet common light of thy bringing,
Dost thou see how I suffer this wrong?



A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM THE GREEK OF BION

I

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead!
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves are lamenting.
Sleep, Cypris, no more, on thy purple-strewed bed;
Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat thy breast unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, "Fair Adonis is dead."

II

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
He lies on the hills, in his beauty and death,
The white tusk of a boar has transpierced his white thigh;
And his Cypris grows mad at the thin gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,
And his eyeballs lie quenched with the weight of his brows.
The rose fades from his lips, and, upon them just parted,
The kiss dies which Cypris consents not to lose,
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-hearted—
He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

III

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
Deep, deep in the thigh is Adonis's wound;
But a deeper in Cypris's bosom presenting—
The youth lieth dead, while his dogs howl around,
And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,—
And the poor Aphrodite, with tresses unbound,
All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill

Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing her feet,
Gather up the red flower of her blood, which is holy,
Each footstep she takes; and the valleys repeat
The sharp cry which she utters, and draw it out slowly
She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him
Her own youth; while the dark blood spreads over his body—
The chest taking hue, from the gash in the limb,
And the bosom, once ivory, turning to ruddy.

IV.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting —
She lost her fair spouse, and so lost her fair smile—
When he lived she was fair, by the whole world's consenting,
Whose fairness is dead with him! woe worth the while!
All the mountains above and the oaklands below
Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis! the streams overflow
Aphrodite's deep wail,—river fountains in pity
Weep soft in the hills; and the flowers, as they blow,
Redden outward with sorrow; while all hear her go
With the song of her sadness, through mountain and city.

V.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead·
Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis!
Who weeps not for Cypris, when, bowing her head,
She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies?
—When, ah, ah!— she saw how the blood ran away
And empurpled the thigh; and. with wild hands flung out,
Said with sobs, "Stay, Adonis! unhappy one, stay—
Let me feel thee once more -let me ring thee about
With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss!
Wait a little, Adonis and kiss me again,
For the last time, beloved; and but so much of this,
That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the strain!
—Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth;
To my heart; and, the love-charm I once more receiving,
May drink thy love in it, and keep, of a truth.
That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.
Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,
My Adonis; and seekest the Acheron portal,—
To Hell's cruel King, goest down with a scar,
While I weep, and live on like a wretched immortal,

And follow no step;—O Persephone, take him,
  My husband!—thou'rt better and brighter than I!
So all beauty flows down to thee! *I* cannot make him
  Look up at my grief; there's despair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis, who died to me . . . died to me . .
  —Then I fear *thee!*- Art thou dead, my Adored?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that's denied to me.—
  Cypris is widowed; the Loves seek their lord
All the house through in vain! Charm of cestus has ceased
  With thy clasp!—O too bold in the hunt, past preventing;
Ay, mad: thou so fair . . . to have strife with a beast!"—
  Thus did Cypris wail on—and the Loves are lamenting.

VI.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead:
  She wept tear after tear, with the blood which was shed;
And both turned into flowers for the earth's garden-close;
  Her tears, to the wind-flower,—his blood, to the rose.

VII.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
  Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover!
So, well; make a place for his corse in thy bed,
  With the purples thou sleepest in, under and over.
He's fair though a corse—a fair corse . . . like a sleeper—
  Lay soft in the silks he had pleasure to fold,
When, beside thee at night, holy dreams deep and deeper
  Enclosed his young life on the couch made of gold!
Love him still, poor Adonis! cast on him together
  The crowns and the flowers! since he died from the place,
Why, let all die with him—let the blossoms go wither;
  Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on his face:
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is best fall a-pining,
  For *thy* myrrh, his life, from thy keeping is swept!—
—Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples reclining,—
  The Loves raised their voices around him and wept.
They have shorn their bright curls off to cast on Adonis:
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows, another,—
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver; and one is
  Bent low at a sandal, untying the strings;
  And one carries the vases of gold from the springs,

While one washes the wound; and behind them a brother
  Fans down on the body sweet airs with his wings.

VIII.

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are lamenting.
  Each torch at the door, Hymenæus blew out;
And the marriage-wreath dropping its leaves as repenting,
  No more "Hymen, Hymen," is chanted about,
But the *ai ai* instead—"ai alas" is begun
  For Adonis, and then follows "ai Hymenæus!"
The Graces are weeping for Cinyras' son,
  Sobbing low, each to each, "His fair eyes cannot see us!"
Their wail strikes more shrill than the sadder Dione's;
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,
Deep chanting! he hears not a word that they say:
  He *would* hear, but Persephone has him in keeping.
—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps for to-day,
  And weep new when a new year refits thee for weeping.

——o——

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(*Odyss.* lib. xx.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:
They were left orphans in their father's house.
And Aphrodite came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
And Here gave them beauty of face and soul
Beyond all women; purest Artemis
Endued them with her stature and white grace;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
Towards far Olympus, Aphrodite went
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
How best to crown those other gifts with love
And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall—
The gods slew their parents, the orphans were left in the hall.
And there came to feed their young lives, Aphrodite divine,
With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling
wine.
Here brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face;
And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have
grace:
And Athene instructed their hands in her works of renown;
Then afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite moved on:
To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate.
She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of
fate,
Whether mortals have good chance or ill! But the Harpies
alate
In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them
to wait,
With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.



SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers in his mirth,
  He would call to the rose, and would royally crown it;
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace of the earth,
  Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it.
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of the flowers,
  Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,—
Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes through the bowers
  On pale lovers that sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the rose lifts the cup
  To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest!
Ho, the rose having curled its sweet leaves for the world
Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
  As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs from the west.

From Achilles Tatius.

Sonnets from the Portuguese.

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I strove, .
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death!" I said But, there,
The silver answer rang, . . "Not Death, but Love."

II

BUT only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said, Himself, beside
Thee speaking and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God! . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee, that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion "Nay" is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend ·
Our hands would touch, for all the mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses, and our destinies
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears, even, can make mine, to ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer? . . . singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,— on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

Thou hast thy calling to some palace floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch, too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush! call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V.

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn

Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well, perhaps. But if, instead,
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off, then! Go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forebore, . . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of two.

VII.

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me; as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I who thought to sink
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, . . who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall,
For such as I to take, or leave withal.
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so. Not cold!—but very poor instead!
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! Let it serve to trample on.

IX.

Can it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles, which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own and grieve
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love . . . which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X.

Yet love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax! An equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed.
And love is fire: and when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . *I love thee!* . . . in thy sight

I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the woodland nightingale
A melancholy music!— . why advert
To these things? O Beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place
And yet because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love and yet in vain,
To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy face

XII.

Indeed, this very love which is my boast
And which, when rising up from breast to brow
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes, and prove the inner cost,
This love even, all my worth to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed
And love called love And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,--
And that I love, (O soul, I must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself . . . me . . . that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
"I love her for her smile . . . her look . . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,
Since one might well forget to weep who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

XV.

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—

For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . . . on thee . . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory . . .
As one who sits and gazes, from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears, and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward as in crushing low:
And, as a soldier struck down by a sword
May cry, "My strife ends here," and sink to earth,
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my doubt! If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine!
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse? . . .
A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length, and say,
"Take it." My day of youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more. It only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first; but Love is justified:
Take it thou, . . . finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart;
And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . .
Thy bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
Here on my heart as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX.

BELOVED, my Beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sate alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, . . but link by link
Went counting all my chains, as if that so

They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . . why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech, nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI.

Say over again and yet once over again
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it,
Remember never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain,
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed!
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry . . . speak once more . . . thou lovest! Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll -
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

XXII.

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Would'st thou miss any life in losing mine,
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Beloved, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range!
Then, love me, Love! look on me . . . breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV.

Let the world's sharpness, like a clasping knife,
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm;
And let us hear no sound of human strife,
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm,
Against the stab of worldlings, who, if rife,
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots! accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer,
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV.

A heavy heart, Beloved, have I borne
From year to year, until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls . . . each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace

Were changed to long despairs, . . . till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I LIVED with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust,— their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come . . . to *be*,
Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours (better, yet the same, . . .
As river water hallowed into fonts . . .)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII.

MY own Beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown
And in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
I find thee: I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life . . . so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness here between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, . . . mute and white!—
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands, which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said, . . . he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
Said, *Dear I love thee:* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past:
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast:
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines about a tree,—
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly
Renew thy presence! As a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs, and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee,
Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee,
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Beloved, is it thou
Or I? Who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,

On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's Amen!
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling hot and real?

XXXI.

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . . that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose!
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!— more like an out of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII.

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear,
Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While *I* call God . . . call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate:
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late!
Yes, call me by that name, and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV.

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee,
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! Is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers, or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought;—break from solitude;—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder how .
Not as to a single good but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And *be* all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing, and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors . . . another home than this?

Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes, too tender to know change?
That's hardest! If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief tries more . . . as all things prove:
For grief indeed is love, and grief beside.
Alas! I have grieved so I am hard to love—
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

When we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these enclasped hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love with worthless counterfeit;
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort,
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write,
And ever since it grew more clean and white, . . .
Slow to world-greetings . . . quick with its "Oh, list!"
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third, upon my lips, was folded down
In perfect, purple state! since when, indeed,
I have been proud, and said, "My Love, my own."

XXXIX.

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me,
(Against which, years have beat thus blenchingly
With their rains!) and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race:—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for his place
In the new Heavens: because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all, which others viewing, turn to go, . . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed, . . .
Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL.

Oh yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love, forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth

For any weeping Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut, if after frequent showers
The shell is over smooth, and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,
Or else to oblivion But thou art not such
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry "Too late"

XLI

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation beyond call
But thou, who in my voice's sink and fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument, didst drop down at thy foot,
To hearken what I said between my tears,
Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, with Life that disappears!

XLII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right,
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise,
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith,
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death

XLIII.

Beloved, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts, which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding: yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.



INDEX OF FIRST LINES.

THE END.

MORRISON AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.